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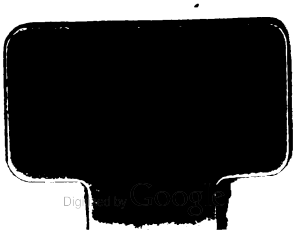

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MILTON'S COMUS, L'ALLEGRO, AND IL PENSEROSO

ADAPTED FOR USE IN TRAINING COLLEGES AND SCHOOLS.

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LONDON
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MILTON'S COMUS, L'ALLEGRO,

AND

IL PENSEROSO.

WITH

NUMEROUS ILLUSTRATIVE NOTES ETC.

ADAPTED FOR USE IN TRAINING COLLEGES AND SCHOOLS.

BY THE

REV. JOHN HUNTER, M.A.

Instructor of Candidates for the Civil Service and other Public Examinations.

LONDON:
LONGMAN, GREEN, LONGMAN, ROBERTS, & GREEN.
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PREFACE.

In the *Comus*, *L'Allegro*, and *Il Penseroso*, we have poetry of an older kind—older both in language and sentiment—than in the *Paradise Lost* of the same author. Between the production of the former poems and that of the latter, an interval of about thirty years, occupied with affairs of state and with political controversy, produced a great change in the spirit with which Milton had regarded

> Such sights as youthful poets dream
> On summer eves by haunted stream.

To be acquainted, therefore, with the poetry of his earlier days, especially his *Comus*, *L'Allegro*, and *Il Penseroso*, is to possess a necessary means of duly estimating his poetical character.

The First and Second Books of Milton's *Paradise Lost* having been already published with Notes for the use of teachers and students, it has seemed expedient to issue with the same design the best of his Minor Poems, both as containing a treasury of thought productive of the highest utility and enjoyment to the literary mind, and as being often included among the subjects prescribed to candidates for public examinations.

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The present work will, it is hoped, be found to explain many difficulties both of language and allusion occurring in these poems, and to promote an appreciation of many beauties that might escape notice in an ordinary perusal.

LONDON: *March* 1864.

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REMARKS OF VARIOUS AUTHORS

ON

MILTON'S

COMUS, L'ALLEGRO, AND IL PENSEROSO.

'It was in the year 1634 that his *Masque* was presented at Ludlow Castle. There was formerly a President of Wales, and a sort of a court kept at Ludlow, which has since been abolished; and the president at that time was the Earl of Bridgewater, before whom Milton's *Masque* was presented on Michaelmas night; and the principal parts, those of the two brothers, were performed by his Lordship's sons, the Lord Brackly and Mr. Thomas Egerton; and that of the lady by his Lordship's daughter, the Lady Alice Egerton. The occasion of this poem seemeth to have been merely an accident of the two brothers and the lady having lost one another in their way to the castle, and it is written very much in imitation of Shakespeare's *Tempest*, and the *Faithful Shepherdess* of Beaumont and Fletcher; and though one of the first, is yet one of the most beautiful of Milton's compositions. It was for some time handed about only in manuscript, but afterwards, to satisfy the importunity of friends, and to save the trouble of transcribing it, it was printed at London, though without the author's name, in 1637, with a dedication to the Lord Brackly, by Mr. H. Lawes, who composed the music, and played the part of the attendant spirit.'—Newton's *Life of Milton.*

'In 1738 *Comus* was presented on the stage at Drury Lane, with musical accompaniments by Dr. Arne, and the applica-

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tion of additional songs, selected and adapted from *L'Allegro*, &c.; and, although not calculated to shine in theatric exhibitions, for those very reasons which constitute its essential and specific merit, from this introduction to notice *Comus* grew popular as a poem. *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* were set to music by Handel in 1741; and his expressive harmonies here received the honour which they have so seldom found, but which they so justly deserve, of being "*married to immortal verse.*"'—WARTON'S *Preface to Milton's Minor Poems.*

'We must not read *Comus* with an eye to the stage, or with the expectation of dramatic propriety. Under this restriction, the absurdity of the *Spirit* speaking to an audience in a solitary forest at midnight, and the want of reciprocation in the dialogue, are overlooked. *Comus* is a suite of speeches; not interesting by discrimination of character; not conveying a variety of incidents, nor gradually exciting curiosity: but perpetually attracting attention by sublime sentiment, by fanciful imagery of the richest vein, by an exuberance of picturesque description, poetical allusion, and ornamental expression. While it widely departs from the grotesque anomalies of the mask now in fashion, it does not nearly approach to the natural constitution of a regular play. There is a chastity in the application and conduct of the machinery; and *Sabrina* is introduced with much address, after the brothers had imprudently suffered the enchantment of *Comus* to take effect. This is the first time the old English Mask was in some degree reduced to the principles and form of rational composition; yet still it could not but retain some of its arbitrary peculiarities. The poet had here properly no more to do with the pathos of tragedy than the character of comedy. Nor do I know that he was confined to the usual modes of theatrical interlocution. A great critic [Dr. Johnson] observes, that the dispute between the *Lady* and *Comus* is the most animated and affecting scene of the piece. Perhaps some other scenes, either consisting only of a soliloquy, or of three or four speeches only, have afforded more true pleasure. The same critic thinks that in all the moral dialogue, although the language is poetical, and the sentiments generous, something is still wanting to *allure*

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attention. But surely, in such passages, sentiments so generous, and language so poetical, are sufficient to rouse all our feelings. For this reason, I cannot admit his position that *Comus* is a drama *tediously instructive*. And if, as he says, to these ethical discussions the auditor listens, as to a lecture, without passion, without anxiety, yet he listens with elevation and delight. The action is said to be improbable, because the brothers, when their sister sinks with fatigue in a pathless wilderness, wander both away together in search of berries, too far to find their way back, and leave a helpless lady to all the sadness and danger of solitude. But here is no desertion or neglect of the lady. The brothers leave their sister under a spreading pine in the forest, fainting for refreshment; they go to procure berries or some other fruit for her immediate relief, and, with great probability, lose their way in going or returning: to say nothing of the poet's art in making this very natural and simple accident to be productive of the distress which forms the future business and complication of the fable. It is certainly a fault, that the brothers, although with some indications of anxiety, should enter with so much tranquillity when their sister is lost, and at leisure pronounce philosophical panegyrics on the mysteries of virginity; but we must not too scrupulously attend to the exigencies of situation, nor suffer ourselves to suppose that we are reading a *play*, which Milton did not mean to write. These splendid insertions will please, independently of the story, from which, however, they result; and their elegance and sublimity will overbalance their want of place. In a Greek tragedy, such sentimental harangues, arising from the subject, would have been given to a *Chorus*. On the whole, whether *Comus* be or be not deficient as a drama, whether it is considered as an epic drama, a series of lines, a mask, or a poem, I am of opinion that our author is here only inferior to his own *Paradise Lost*.' — WARTON'S Edition of *Milton's Minor Poems*.

'The first published verses of Milton were an epitaph on the admirable dramatic poet, Shakespeare, commencing thus:—

> What needs my Shakespeare for his honour'd bones,
> The labour of an age in piled stones?

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Or, that his hallow'd reliques should be hid
Under a star-ypointing pyramid?

'It is remarkable that, while our author was himself meditating "to build the lofty rhyme," and frame a work more stately, and not less enduring, than a "star-ypointing pyramid," his minor productions, whereon he exercised and perfected his skill for that great undertaking, on materials the most precious and wrought into the most exquisite symmetry, he left strewn about, here and there, for chance publication, without so much as giving his name, when he allowed them to escape into print. Even at the stage of prime manhood, when his muse, in her halcyon days, had brought forth *Comus*—

That happy miracle of her rare birth—

he abandoned it, as the ostrich trusts her young in the wilderness, to be disclosed to the world by his friend Henry Lawes, who composed the accompanying music, when it was performed with lordly pomp at Ludlow Castle; the principal actors being three children of the noble family of John, Earl of Bridgewater, on whose misadventure, in a neighbouring wood, the romantic fable is founded. In point of fine fancy, rich embellishment, diction of unsurpassable beauty, and high-toned moral sentiment, this masque may be pronounced the most perfect of Milton's compositions. But to be enjoyed, it must be read as a poem, for the sake of these excellences, and not as a drama representing anything probable or possible in human life, under any imaginable circumstances, even admitting the preternatural machinery which the poet has introduced to exalt a simple incident into tragic dignity. For, were Comus and his crew, Sabrina and her nymphs, as real as the lady herself, the elder and the younger brother, but especially the attendant spirit, would not have discoursed so learnedly, nor acted so dilatorily (though each may have felt all that each is made to express), in a crisis of such agonising suspense and imminent peril to the captured lady, after they knew her situation. With this drawback (if it be one except in reference to a stage exhibition) *Comus* may claim the eulogium which a critic of the purest taste, the late Dr. Aikin, has passed upon

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it. He says: "The poem possesses great beauty of versification, varying from the gayest Anacreontics to the most majestic and sonorous heroics. On the whole, if an example were required of a work made up of the very essence of poetry, perhaps none of equal length, in any language, could be produced answering this character in so high a degree as the *Masque of Comus*." It may be added that here Milton first tried his hand in blank verse, and proved himself master of the whole diapason of rythmical tones and cadences, through all their implications.'—JAMES MONTGOMERY'S *Memoir of Milton*.

'In none of the works of Milton is his peculiar manner more happily displayed than in the *Allegro* and the *Penseroso*. It is impossible to conceive that the mechanism of language can be brought to a more exquisite degree of perfection. These poems differ from others, as atar of roses differs from ordinary rose water, the close packed essence from the thin diluted mixture. They are, indeed, not so much poems as collections of hints, from each of which the reader is to make out a poem for himself. Every epithet is a text for a stanza.

'The *Comus* and the *Samson Agonistes* are works which, though of very different merit, offer some marked points of resemblance. Both are lyric poems in the form of plays. There are, perhaps, no two kinds of composition so essentially dissimilar as the drama and the ode. The business of the dramatist is to keep himself out of sight, and to let nothing appear but his characters. As soon as he attracts notice to his personal feelings, the illusion is broken; the effect is as unpleasant as that which is produced on the stage by the voice of the prompter or the entrance of a scene-shifter.

'But this species of egotism, though fatal to the drama, is the inspiration of the ode. It is the part of the lyric poet to abandon himself without reserve to his own emotions.

'Between these hostile elements many great men have endeavoured to effect an amalgamation, but never with complete success.

'The *Comus* is framed on the model of the Italian Masque, as the *Samson* is framed on the model of the Greek Tragedy.

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It is certainly the noblest performance of the kind which exists in any language. It is as far superior to the *Faithful Shepherdess* as the *Faithful Shepherdess* is to the *Aminta*, or the *Aminta* to the *Pastor Fido*. It was well for Milton that he had here no Euripides to mislead him. He understood and loved the literature of modern Italy; but he did not feel for it the same veneration which he entertained for the remains of Athenian and Roman poetry, consecrated by so many lofty and endearing recollections. The faults, moreover, of his Italian predecessors were of a kind to which his mind had a deadly antipathy. He could stoop to a plain style, sometimes even to a bald style; but false brilliancy was his utter aversion. His muse had no objection to a russet attire; but she turned with disgust from the finery of Guarini, as tawdry and as paltry as the rags of a chimney-sweeper on May-day. Whatever ornaments she wears are of massive gold, not only dazzling to the sight, but capable of standing the severest test of the crucible.

'Milton attended, in the *Comus*, to the distinction which he afterwards neglected in the *Samson*. He made his Masque what it ought to be, essentially lyrical, and dramatic only in semblance. He has not attempted a fruitless struggle against a defect inherent in the nature of that species of composition; and he has therefore succeeded, wherever success was not impossible. The speeches must be read as majestic soliloquies; and he who so reads them will be enraptured with their eloquence, their sublimity, and their music. The interruptions of the dialogue, however, impose a constraint upon the writer, and break the illusion of the reader. The finest passages are those which are lyric in form as well as in spirit.

'"I should much commend," says the excellent Sir Henry Wotton, in a letter to Milton, "the tragical part, if the lyrical did not ravish me with a certain Dorique delicacy in your songs and odes, whereunto I must plainly confess to you I have seen yet nothing parallel in our language." The criticism was just. It is when Milton escapes from the shackles of the dialogue, when he is discharged from the labour of uniting two incongruous styles, when he is at liberty to indulge his choral raptures without reserve, that he rises even above himself. Then,

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like his own good Genius bursting from the earthly form and weeds of Thyrsis, he stands forth in celestial freedom and beauty; he seems to cry exultingly—

> Now my task is smoothly done,
> I can fly or I can run.'
>
> MACAULAY'S *Critique on Milton.*

'*Comus* was sufficient to convince any one of taste and feeling that a great poet had arisen in England, and one partly formed in a different school from his contemporaries. Many of them had produced highly beautiful and imaginative passages; but none had evinced so classical a judgment, none had aspired to so regular a perfection. Jonson had learned much from the ancients; but there was a grace in their best models which he did not quite attain. Neither his *Sad Shepherd* nor the *Faithful Shepherdess* of Fletcher has the elegance or dignity of *Comus*. A noble virgin and her young brothers, by whom the Masque was originally represented, required an elevation, a purity, a sort of severity of sentiment, which no one in that age could have given but Milton. He avoided, and nothing loth, the more festive notes which dramatic poetry was wont to mingle with its serious strain. But for this he compensated by the brightest hues of fancy, and the sweetest melody of song. In *Comus* we find nothing prosaic or feeble, no false taste in the incidents, and not much in the language, nothing over which we should desire to pass on a second perusal. The want of what we may call personality, none of the characters having names except Comus himself, who is a very indefinite being, and the absence of all positive attributes of time and place, enhance the ideality of the fiction by a certain indistinctness not unpleasing to the imagination.'—HALLAM'S *Literature of Europe.*

'Of the two pieces, *L'Allegro and Il Penseroso*, I believe opinion is uniform; every man that reads them, reads them with pleasure. The author's design is not, what Theobald has remarked, merely to show how objects derive their colours from the mind, by representing the operation of the same things upon the gay and the melancholy temper, or upon the same man as he is

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differently disposed; but rather how, among the successive variety of appearances, every disposition of mind takes hold on those by which it may be gratified.

'The *cheerful* man hears the lark in the morning; the *pensive* man hears the nightingale in the evening. The *cheerful* man sees the cock strut, and hears the horn and hounds echo in the wood; then walks *not unseen* to observe the glory of the rising sun, or listen to the singing milk-maid, and view the labours of the ploughman and the mower; then casts his eyes about him over scenes of smiling plenty, and looks up to the distant tower, the residence of some fair inhabitant; thus he pursues real gaiety through a day of labour or of play, and delights himself at night with the fanciful narratives of superstitious ignorance.

'The *pensive* man, at one time, walks *unseen* to muse at midnight; and at another hears the sullen curfew. If the weather drives him home, he sits in a room lighted only by *glowing embers*; or by a lonely lamp outwatches the North Star, to discover the habitation of separate souls; and varies the shades of meditation, by contemplating the magnificent or pathetic scenes of tragic and epic poetry. When the morning comes, a morning gloomy with rain and wind, he walks into the dark trackless woods, falls asleep by some murmuring water, and with melancholy enthusiasm expects some dream of prognostication, or some music played by aerial performers.

'Both Mirth and Melancholy are solitary, silent inhabitants of the breast, that neither receive nor transmit communication; no mention is therefore made of a philosophical friend, or a pleasant companion. The seriousness does not arise from any participation of calamity, nor the gaiety from the pleasures of the bottle.

'The man of *cheerfulness*, having exhausted the country, tries what *towered cities* will afford, and mingles with scenes of splendour, gay assemblies, and nuptial festivities; but he mingles a mere spectator, as, when the learned comedies of Jonson, or the wild dramas of Shakespeare are exhibited, he attends the theatre.

'The *pensive* man never loses himself in crowds, but walks the cloister, or frequents the cathedral. Milton probably had not yet forsaken the church.

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'Both his characters delight in music; but he seems to think that cheerful notes would have obtained from Pluto a complete dismission of Eurydice, of whom solemn sounds procured only a conditional release.

'For the old age of Cheerfulness he makes no provision; but Melancholy he conducts with great dignity to the close of life. His Cheerfulness is without levity, and his Pensiveness without asperity.

'Through these two poems the images are properly selected and nicely distinguished; but the colours of the diction seem not sufficiently discriminated. I know not whether the characters are kept sufficiently apart. No mirth can, indeed, be found in his melancholy; but I am afraid that I always meet some melancholy in his mirth. They are two noble efforts of imagination.

'The greatest of his juvenile performances is the *Mask of Comus*, in which may very plainly be discovered the dawn or twilight of *Paradise Lost*. Milton appears to have formed very early that system of diction, and mode of verse, which his maturer judgment approved, and from which he never endeavoured nor desired to deviate.

'Nor does *Comus* afford only a specimen of his language; it exhibits likewise his power of description and his vigour of sentiment, employed in the praise and defence of virtue. A work more truly poetical is rarely found; allusions, images, and descriptive epithets, embellish almost every period with lavish decoration. As a series of lines, therefore, it may be considered as worthy of all the admiration with which the votaries have received it.

'As a drama it is deficient. The action is not probable. A masque, in those parts where supernatural intervention is admitted, must indeed be given up to all the freaks of imagination; but, so far as the action is merely human, it ought to be reasonable, which can hardly be said of the conduct of the two brothers, who, when their sister sinks with fatigue in a pathless wilderness, wander both away together in search of berries too far to find their way back, and leave a helpless lady to all the sadness and danger of solitude. This, however, is a defect overbalanced by its convenience.

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'What deserves more reprehension is, that the prologue spoken in the wild wood by the attendant Spirit is addressed to the audience; a mode of communication so contrary to the nature of dramatic representation, that no precedents can support it.

'The discourse of the Spirit is too long; an objection that may be made to almost all the following speeches; they have not the sprightliness of a dialogue animated by reciprocal contention, but seem rather declamations deliberately composed, and formally repeated, on a moral question. The auditor, therefore, listens as to a lecture, without passion, without anxiety.

'The song of Comus has airiness and jollity; but, what may recommend Milton's morals as well as his poetry, the invitations to pleasure are so general, that they excite no distinct images of corrupt enjoyment, and take no dangerous hold on the fancy.

'The following soliloquies of Comus and the Lady are elegant, but tedious. The song must owe much to the voice, if it ever can delight. At last the Brothers enter, with too much tranquillity; and when they have feared lest their sister should be in danger, and hoped that she is not in danger, the elder makes a speech in praise of chastity, and the younger finds how fine it is to be a philosopher.

'Then descends the spirit in form of a shepherd; and the brother, instead of being in haste to ask his help, praises his singing, and enquires his business in that place. It is remarkable that at this interview the brother is taken with a short fit of rhyming. The Spirit relates that the lady is in the power of Comus; the Brother moralises again; and the Spirit makes a long narration, of no use because it is false, and therefore unsuitable to a good Being.

'In all these parts the language is poetical, and the sentiments are generous, but there is something wanted to allure attention.

'The dispute between the Lady and Comus is the most animated and affecting scene of the drama, and wants nothing but a brisker reciprocation of objections and replies to invite attention and detain it.

'The songs are vigorous, and full of imagery; but they are harsh in their diction, and not very musical in their numbers.

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'Throughout the whole, the figures are too bold, and the language too luxuriant for dialogue. It is a drama in the epic style, inelegantly splendid, and tediously instructive.'

DR. JOHNSON'S *Life of Milton*.

'If Dr. Johnson's prejudices have not led him in general to undervalue the poetry of Milton, his particular criticisms seem, however, in some instances, to expose him to the charge of that defective sensibility to poetic beauty which is too apparent in the whole course of his present labours. Nothing is indeed proved by setting one man's taste in opposition to another's; yet when Johnson says: 'Surely no man could have fancied that he read *Lycidas* with pleasure, had he not known the author,' while Dr. Warton has represented a relish for the same performance as a test of true taste in poetry, we cannot but suspect a strange bluntness or perversion in the feelings of the one, even admitting somewhat of enthusiasm and learned prejudice in the other. Johnson, it is true, supports his censure of the piece by those arguments of plain sense which are pretty obvious, and against which it is often difficult for a work of imagination to stand; and had the purpose been to have shown how true genius might be misled by bad models and pedantry, the lesson would have been valuable; but that such defects should annihilate all pleasure in the perusal of a work abounding in strokes of high poetry, could only happen in a mind shut against those appeals to the fancy, and those elegant associations which are the very essence of the poet's art.

'The coldness and disparagement with which he speaks of *Comus*, appears to me a still stronger proof of this mental callousness, perhaps the disease of his old age. He has, indeed, given it general commendation; but had he *felt* its charms, could he have nicely weighed it by dramatic rules, complained of the length of its noblest passages, and employed a vulgar banter to ridicule its sentiments and incidents? "The elder Brother makes a speech in praise of chastity, and the younger finds how fine it is to be a philosopher." Is this the way in which a true critic would speak of lines glowing with dignified and virtuous feelings, and animated with the pure spirit of poetry? It will be admitted that *Comus* is not adapted to a

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public theatre. It was not written for such, but for the hall of a nobleman, in the purpose of inspiring elevated sentiments into the breasts of the actors and audience; and what piece was ever calculated to effect this in a more exalted degree? Who ever, except Johnson, thought it "inelegantly splendid, and tediously instructive?"'—DR. AIKIN'S *Remarks on Johnson's Life of Milton.*

'*L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* may be called the two first descriptive poems in the English language. It is perhaps true, that the characters are not sufficiently kept apart. But this circumstance has been productive of greater excellences. It has been remarked, "No mirth indeed can be found in his melancholy; but I am afraid I always meet some melancholy in his mirth." Milton's is the dignity of mirth; his cheerfulness is the cheerfulness of gravity. The objects he selects in his *L'Allegro* are so far gay as they do not naturally excite sadness. Laughter and jollity are named only as personifications, and never exemplified. Quips and cranks, and wanton wiles, are enumerated only in general terms. There is specifically no mirth in contemplating a fine landscape. And even his landscape, although it has flowery meads and flocks, wears a shade of pensiveness, and contains russet lawns, fallows grey, and barren mountains overhung with labouring clouds. Its old turreted mansions peeping from the trees, awakens only a train of solemn and romantic, perhaps melancholy, reflection. Many a pensive man listens with delight to the milkmaid singing blithe, to the mower whetting his scythe, and to a distant peal of village bells. He chose such illustrations as minister matter for true poetry and genuine description. Even his most brilliant imagery is mellowed with the sober hues of philosophical meditation. It was impossible for the author of *Il Penseroso* to be more cheerful, or to paint mirth with levity; that is, otherwise than in the colours of the higher poetry. Both poems are the result of the same feelings, and the same habits of thought.

'Dr. Johnson has remarked that in *L'Allegro*, "no part of the gaiety is made to arise from the pleasure of the bottle." The truth is, that Milton means to describe the cheerfulness of the

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philosopher or the student, the amusements of a contemplative mind. And on this principle he seems unwilling to allow that mirth is the offspring of Bacchus and Venus, deities who preside over sensual gratifications, but rather adopts the fiction of those more serious and sapient fablers who suppose that her proper parents are Zephyr and Aurora; intimating, that her cheerful enjoyments are those of the temperate and innocent kind, of early hours and rural pleasures. That critic does not appear to have entered into the spirit, or to have comprehended the meaning of our author's *Allegro*.'—WARTON'S *Edition of Milton's Minor Poems.*

[Milton, born in London in 1608; died there in 1674. On leaving Cambridge in 1632, he went to live at his father's estate at Horton near Colnbrooke, Bucks, a little to the east of Windsor. He resided at Horton five years; and in 1637 visited France and Italy. From 1638 till the restoration of Charles II. in 1660, he was occupied in political controversy, or in the official duties of Latin Secretary to Cromwell. It was during the five years of his literary retirement at Horton that Milton wrote the *Arcades* (1634); *Comus* (1634); *Lycidas* (1637); and *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*. The precise date of the composition of these last two is uncertain; but the subject of them seems to have been suggested to Milton by a poem prefixed to the first edition of Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*, some of the lines of which we here subjoin from Peck's quotation of the poem in his *Memoirs of Milton*, along with a song from Fletcher's comedy of *Nice Valour*, which the reader will at once perceive to have been present to the mind of the writer of *Il Penseroso*.—EDITOR.]

When I go musing all alone,
And think of diverse things foreknown;
When I build castles in the air,
And void of sorrow, void of fear,
Still please myself with fancies sweet,
Methinks the time runs very fleet;
All my joys to this are folly;
Nought so sad as Melancholy.
When to myself I act and smile,
With pleasing thoughts the time beguile,
By a brook side or wood so green,
Unheard, unsought for, and unseen.
Methinks I hear, methinks I see,
Soft music, and sweet melody,
Towns, palaces, and cities fine,
Where beauties, and fair ladies shine;
All other joys to this are folly;
Nought so blest as Melancholy.
Methinks I hear, methinks I see,
Ghosts, goblins, fiends; my phantasy
Presents a thousand ugly shapes;
Each doleful cry, each fearful sight,
Doth still my troubled soul affright;
All other griefs to this are jolly:
Nought so curst as Melancholy.

BURTON.

Hence all you vain delights,
As short as are the nights
Wherein ye spend your folly;
There 's nought in this life sweet,
If man were wise to see 't,
But only Melancholy;
O sweetest Melancholy!
Welcome arms folded and fixed eyes,
A sigh that, piercing, mortifies,
A look that 's fastened to the ground,
A tongue chained up without a sound;
Fountain heads, and pathless groves,
Places which pale passion loves
Moonlight walks, when all the fowls
Are warmly housed, save bats and owls;
A midnight bell, a parting groan—
These are the sounds we feed upon;
Then stretch our bones in a still gloomy valley—
Nothing 's so dainty sweet as lovely Melancholy.

FLETCHER.

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COMUS,

A MASK,

PRESENTED AT LUDLOW CASTLE, 1634, BEFORE JOHN EARL OF BRIDGEWATER, THEN PRESIDENT OF WALES.

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THE PERSONS.

THE ATTENDANT SPIRIT, *afterward in the habit of* THYRSIS.
COMUS, *with his Crew.*
THE LADY.
FIRST BROTHER.
SECOND BROTHER.
SABRINA, *the Nymph.*

The chief persons who presented, were

THE LORD BRACKLEY.
MR. THOMAS EGERTON, *his brother.*
THE LADY ALICE EGERTON.

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COMUS.

The first Scene discovers a wild Wood.

THE ATTENDANT SPIRIT *descends or enters.*

BEFORE the starry threshold of Jove's court
My mansion is, where those immortal shapes
Of bright aerial spirits live insphered
In regions mild of calm and serene air,
Above the smoke and stir of this dim spot,
Which men call earth; and, with low-thoughted care
Confined and pestered in this pinfold here,
Strive to keep up a frail and feverish being,
Unmindful of the crown that virtue gives,
After this mortal change, to her true servants,

3. *Insphered.*] Within their assigned sphere. The portions of space occupied by departed souls were called *spheres*.

7. *Pestered in this pinfold.*] The word *pestered* originally means crowded, obstructed. Ital. *pesta*, a crowd.

> Your coach whose rude postilion
> Must *pester* every narrow lane.
> Shirley's *Lady of Pleasure*, i.
> So all unhoused souls do thither creep,
> Nor are they *pestered* for want of room.
> Sandys' *Ovid*, iv. 441.

A pinfold is a pen or pound for cattle.

10. *After this mortal change.*] The demonstrative meaning implied in the word *this* does not seem consistent with the character of the speaker. Milton had originally written—

> Strive to keep up a frail and feverish being
> Beyond *the written date of mortal change*,
> Unmindful of the crown that virtue gives,
> *After this mortal change*, . . .

but he blotted out the second line without altering the reference to it in the fourth. Warton, commenting on another passage in Milton, says, 'When a poet corrects, he is apt to forget and destroy his original train of thought.' We must, perhaps, allow the words, as they stand, to mean—after this state of mortal change.

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Amongst the enthroned gods on sainted seats.
Yet some there be that, by due steps, aspire
To lay their just hands on that golden key
That opes the palace of eternity:
To such my errand is; and, but for such,
I would not soil these pure ambrosial weeds
With the rank vapours of this sin-worn mould.
But to my task. Neptune, besides the sway
Of every salt flood and each ebbing stream,
Took in by lot 'twixt high and nether Jove
Imperial rule of all the sea-girt isles,
That, like to rich and various gems, inlay
The unadorned bosom of the deep:
Which he, to grace his tributary gods,

---

15. *But for such.*] The adverbial phrase *for such*, and the adverb *not*, in the following line, are connected by the conjunction *but*, and both modify the verb *soil*. The construction is, I would not but for such soil these pure, &c.; and, in analysis, the whole phrase *not but for such* may be treated as an adverbial adjunct to *soil*.

16. *Ambrosial weeds.*] The word *weeds*, which was used to denote garments generally, is still applied to the mourning attire of the widow. Ambrosia signified the food of the gods, and also an unguent said to be used by them, and to be of immortalizing virtue. *See* lines 840–1.

17. *Sin-worn mould.*] Sin-corrupted earth.

20. *Took in by lot.*] On the dethronement of Saturn, his three sons, Jupiter, Neptune and Pluto, shared the empire of the universe. Pluto was called Stygian Jove ('sacra Jovi Stygio perficere,' Virg. *Æn.* iv. 638), because he was the chief divinity in the lower world, as Jupiter was in the upper.

22. *Like to rich and various gems.*] This comparison of the sea-girt isles to gems is probably derived from Shakspeare having called England a 'precious stone set in the silver sea' (*Rich. II.*, ii. 1). The adjective *like*, which here qualifies *isles*, is now seldom followed by the preposition *to*, when that word is necessary to complete the construction. Compare *l.* 67.

23. *Unadorned.*] Naked; not adorned as the land.

24. *To grace, &c.*] The infinitive thus used makes an adverbial clause = that he may grace, &c. In the next line but one an infinitive phrase is used adjectively describing the noun *leave*.

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By course commits to several government,
And gives them leave to wear their sapphire crowns,
And wield their little tridents: But this isle,
The greatest and the best of all the main,
He quarters to his blue-haired deities;
And all this tract that fronts the falling sun
A noble peer of mickle trust and power
Has in his charge, with tempered awe to guide
An old and haughty nation, proud in arms:
Where his fair offspring, nursed in princely lore,
Are coming to attend their father's state,
And new-intrusted sceptre: but their way
Lies through the perplexed paths of this drear wood,
The nodding horror of whose shady brows
Threats the forlorn and wandering passenger;
And here their tender age might suffer peril,
But that by quick command from sovereign Jove
I was despatched for their defence and guard:
And listen why; for I will tell you now

---

25. *By course.*] In regular distribution commits to divided government; to each his own distinct government.

29. *He quarters, &c.*] He apportions to such water-nymphs as the Nereides.

30. *All this tract, &c.*] The tract fronting the falling sun, or west (sol occideus), is Wales, of which the Earl of Bridgewater was appointed Lord President. His family residence was Ashridge House, a few miles from Tring.

35. *Their father's state.*] The ceremony of his being instated at Ludlow Castle, his official residence. This is retrospective; as he was appointed to the Presidency of Wales by Charles I., in May 1633. The Lady Alice Egerton was only about 13 years of age, and the elder of her brothers about 12, when they performed in the mask at Ludlow Castle.

38. *Horror.*] Shagginess. *See* Note on *l.* 429.

41. *But that, &c.*] We have here the noun clause *that I was despatched, &c.*, forming an object to the preposition *but*; and the 41st and 42nd lines constitute an adverbial clause to *suffer*.

43. *Why.*] That is, why I was despatched, &c., a noun clause objective. The direct object of the verb *tell* is the whole of the two succeeding lines.

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What never yet was heard in tale or song,
From old or modern bard, in hall or bower.
Bacchus, that first from out the purple grape
Crushed the sweet poison of misused wine,
After the Tuscan mariners transformed,
Coasting the Tyrrhene shore, as the winds listed,
On Circe's island fell: (Who knows not Circe,
The daughter of the Sun, whose charmed cup
Whoever tasted lost his upright shape,
And downward fell into a grovelling swine?)
This nymph, that gazed upon his clustering locks
With ivy berries wreathed, and his blithe youth,
Had by him, ere he parted thence, a son
Much like his father, but his mother more,

---

45. *In hall or bower.*] In banquet room or private apartment. So, in Spenser's *Faërie Queene*, VI. ix. 32, 'And this your cabin [shall be] both my bower and hall.' And in Chaucer's *Nun Priest's Tale*,

Full sooty was her bower and eke her hall.

46. *From out.*] That is, *out from*; *out* being an adverb. Comp. '*from off* the waters,' *l.* 896.

Let them *from forth* a saw-pit rush at once.
Shakspeare's *Merry Wives*, iv. 4.

48. *After the Tuscan mariners transformed.*] That is, being transformed. The poet here imitates a Latin construction; comp. Horace, *Od.* I. iii. 29, 'Post ignem subductum;' so in *Par. Lost*, i. 573, 'Never *since created man* met such embodied force.' The god Bacchus punished the Tuscan pirates by transforming them into sea-monsters. The story is told in Ovid, *Met.* iii. 660.

49. *The Tyrrhene shore.*] The Tuscan shore, or shore of Etruria. *See* what Ovid says of Glaucus, 'Tyrrhena per æquora lapsus,' &c. (*Met.* xiv. 8).

50. *Circe's island.*] The small island Ææa, afterwards, by union with the mainland, forming the promontory of Circeii. Circe was the daughter of Apollo, her mother being one of the Oceanides, named Perse.

Proxima Circææ raduntur litora terræ,
Dives inaccessos ubi Solis filia lucos
Assidue resonat cantu . . .

Who knows not Circe, &c. Compare Horace, *Epist.* I. ii. 23.

Sirenum voces et Circæ pocula nôsti,
Quæ si cum sociis stultus cupidusque bibisset,
Sub dominâ meretrice fuisset turpis et excors,
Vixisset canis immundus, vel amica luto sus.

52. *Whoever tasted whose charmed cup*, is a noun sentence nominative to *lost*, and also part of an adjective sentence describing *Circe*.

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Whom therefore she brought up, and Comus named:
Who, ripe and frolic of his full-grown age,
Roving the Celtic and Iberian fields,
At last betakes him to this ominous wood;
And, in thick shelter of black shades imbowered,
Excels his mother at her mighty art,
Offering to every weary traveller
His orient liquor in a crystal glass,
To quench the drouth of Phœbus; which as they taste,
(For most do taste, through fond intemperate thirst),
Soon as the potion works, their human countenance,
The express resemblance of the gods, is changed
Into some brutish form of wolf, or bear,
Or ounce, or tiger, hog, or bearded goat,
All other parts remaining as they were;
And they, so perfect is their misery,
Not once perceive their foul disfigurement,
But boast themselves more comely than before,
And all their friends and native home forget,
To roll with pleasure in a sensual sty.
Therefore, when any favoured of high Jove
Chances to pass through this adventurous glade,
Swift as the sparkle of a glancing star

59. *Frolic of his full-grown age.*] Buoyant, full of the spirit of opening manhood, which prompted him to rove the Celtic and Iberian fields, i.e. through France and Spain. *See* Note to *l.* 1023.

65. *Orient.*] Bright. This word, derived from the Latin *oriens*, rising, has allusion to *sol oriens*, the rising sun, or the east.

74. *Not once perceive, &c.*] It was otherwise with Circe's victims, who, according to Homer, *Odyss.* x. 241, knew and deplored their degradation.

77. *To roll, &c.*] Adverbial use of the infinitive. *See* Note on *l.* 24.

79. *Adventurous.*] Hazardous, perilous.

80. *Glancing star.*] Shooting star. So in *Par. Lost*, iv. 555, Uriel is said to glide through the even 'swift as a shooting star in autumn thwarts the night.' To glance is to dart obliquely. Comp. Spenser, *F. Q.* VI., vii. 7.

> One did miss his mark,
> And being carried with his force forthright,
> Glanced swiftly by; like to that heavenly spark
> Which, gliding through the air, lights all the heaven's dark.

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I shoot from heaven to give him safe convoy,
As now I do: But first I must put off
These my sky-robes, spun out of Iris' woof,
And take the weeds and likeness of a swain
That to the service of this house belongs,
Who with his soft pipe, and smooth-dittied song,
Well knows to still the wild winds when they roar,
And hush the waving woods; nor of less faith,
And in this office of his mountain watch
Likeliest, and nearest to the present aid
Of this occasion. But I hear the tread
Of hateful steps; I must be viewless now.

COMUS *enters with a charming-rod in one hand, his glass in the other; with him a rout of monsters, headed like sundry sorts of wild beasts, but otherwise like men and women, their apparel glistering; they come in making a riotous and unruly noise, with torches in their hands.*

Comus. The star that bids the shepherd fold
Now the top of heaven doth hold;
And the gilded car of day
His glowing axle doth allay
In the steep Atlantic stream;
And the slope sun his upward beam

---

83. *Spun out of Iris' woof.*] Spun from material which Iris, the goddess of the rainbow, had dyed. So in *Par. Lost*, xi. 244, 'Iris had dipt the woof.

86. *Smooth-dittied.*] Smoothly worded or adapted to words. Ital. *detti*, words.

88. *Nor of less faith, &c.*] And who is no less faithful; and from his business being to keep watch over the flocks upon the hills, may be supposed most likely to be out at this time, and nearest for the immediate aid required.

93. *The star that bids, &c.*] The evening star. So Shakspeare (*Meas. for Meas.* iv. 3) says of the morning star—'Look, the *unfolding star* calls up the shepherd.'

97. *The steep Atlantic stream.*] The word *stream* here simply means *flood*. So, *Par. Lost*, i. 202, 'the ocean stream;' and Shakspeare, *Merch. of Venice*, i. 1, speaks of the wreck of a ship scattering 'all her spices on the stream.'

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Shoots against the dusky pole,
Pacing toward the other goal
Of his chamber in the east.
Meanwhile, welcome joy and feast,
Midnight shout and revelry
Tipsy dance and jollity.
Braid your locks with rosy twine,
Dropping odours, dropping wine.
Rigour now is gone to bed,
And Advice with scrupulous head,
Strict Age, and sour Severity,
With their grave saws, in slumber lie.
We, that are of purer fire,
Imitate the starry quire,
Who, in their nightly watchful spheres,
Lead in swift round the months and years.
The sounds and seas, with all their finny drove,
Now to the moon in wavering morrice move;
And on the tawny sands and shelves
Trip the pert fairies and the dapper elves.
By dimpled brook and fountain-brim,
The wood-nymphs, decked with daisies trim,

---

101. *His chamber in the east.*] Psalm xix. 5, 'The sun as a bridegroom cometh out of his chamber.'

112. *The starry quire.*] So called because of the supposed 'music of the spheres.' In line 1021 we have 'higher than the sphery chime.'

113. *Nightly watchful.*] Sleepless during night. *See* the Note on *l.* 84 of *Il Penseroso.*

116. *In wavering morrice move.*] Quiver in the moonlight as if dancing. 'Splendet tremulo sub lumine pontus.' Virg. *Æn.* vii. 9. The morris dance, i. e. the Morisco or Moorish dance, said to have been introduced into England, in the reign of Edward III., by John of Gaunt on his return from Spain, is probably of later introduction. The hobby-horse, so often referred to by the old dramatists, was long one of the chief characters in this festive dance.

119. *Fountain brim.*] Fountain edge or border.

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Their merry wakes and pastimes keep;
What hath night to do with sleep?
Night hath better sweets to prove,
Venus now wakes, and wakens Love.
Come, let us our rights begin;
'Tis only day-light that makes sin,
Which these dun shades will ne'er report.
Hail! goddess of nocturnal sport,
Dark-veiled Cotytto, to whom the secret flame
Of midnight torches burns; mysterious dame,
That ne'er art called but when the dragon womb
Of Stygian darkness spets her thickest gloom,
And makes one blot of all the air:
Stay thy cloudy ebon chair,
Wherein thou ridest with Hecate, and befriend
Us thy vowed priests, till utmost end

---

122. *What hath night to do.*] The infinitive is here used adjectively, describing the objective pronoun *what*. In the next line the infinitive *to prove* is adverbial to *hath* and governs *which* understood.

125. *Rights.*] That is, rites. So, in Spenser's *Faërie Queene*, I. vi. 15, 'Cybele's frantic rights.'

129. *Cotytto.*] The goddess of licentiousness. The festival of this Thracian divinity resembled that of the Phrygian Cybele. Her rites, and rites similar to hers, were called Cotyttia; and her worshippers were called Baptæ, because when initiated into her mysteries they were sprinkled with warm water. *See* Juvenal, ii. 91; Horace, *Epod.* xvii. 56.

131. *The dragon womb, &c.*] Night is here represented as a Stygian or Tartarean monster producing darkness. Sometimes Night is supposed to pass over the earth in a dragon car shedding darkness all around her.

> Swift, swift, you dragons of the night.
> Shaksp. *Cymb.* ii. 2.
>
> The dragon wing of night o'erspreads the earth.
> Shaksp. *Troil. and Cress.* v. 9.

133. *Makes one blot of all the air.*] Compare what Shakspeare (*Macb.* ii. 2) says of blood that would

> The multitudinous seas incarnadine,
> Making the green—one [i. e. a universal] red.

135. *Hecate.*] The goddess or patroness of magic, who was supposed to wander over the earth at night. She is here appropriately referred to by the licentious magician Comus, as riding with Cotytto in an ebon chair or car. Compare *Par. Lost*, ii. 930, 'As in a cloudy chair ascending rides.' Massinger in *The City Madam*, v. 1, speaks of 'an oblation unto Hecate, and wanton Lust, her favourite.'

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Of all thy dues be done, and none left out;
Ere the blabbing eastern scout,
The nice morn, on the Indian steep
From her cabined loop-hole peep,
And to the tell-tale sun descry
Our concealed solemnity.
Come, knit hands, and beat the ground
In a light fantastic round.

THE MEASURE.

Break off, break off, I feel the different pace
Of some chaste footing near about this ground.
Run to your shrouds within these brakes and trees;
Our number may affright;—Some virgin sure
(For so I can distinguish by mine art)
Benighted in these woods. Now to my charms,
And to my wily trains: I shall ere long
Be well stocked with as fair a herd as grazed
About my mother Circe. Thus I hurl

---

139. *The nice morn, &c.*] The prudish or fastidious morn on the eastern horizon.

140. *Cabined loop-hole.*] The epithet *cabined* here seems to mean confined or contracted like a cabin.

141. *Descry.*] Here employed in the unusual sense of *give notice of;* discover. Milton had in mind that passage in Fletcher's *Faithful Shepherdess*, iii. 1.

> The sooner we begin,
> The longer ere the day descry our sin.

143. *Beat the ground, &c.*] So Horace speaks of beating the ground with light and playful foot: *Od.* I. xxxvii. 1.

Compare *L'Allegro*, 33,

> Come, and trip it as you go,
> On the light fantastic toe.

At this part of the Masque was introduced a dance; a measure as it is called, because dancing measures time with the music.

146. *Near about.*] The word *near* is adverbial to *about this ground*, which is adverbial to *footing*.

147. *Shrouds.*] Retreats, shelters.

149. *So I can distinguish.*] The magician has the sagacity to distinguish 'chaste footing' from the lascivious dancing of his own crew.

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My dazzling spells into the spungy air,
Of power to cheat the eye with blear illusion,
And give it false presentments, lest the place
And my quaint habits breed astonishment,
And put the damsel to suspicious flight;
Which must not be, for that's against my course;
I, under fair pretence of friendly ends,
And well-placed words of glozing courtesy,
Baited with reasons not unplausible,
Wind me into the easy-hearted man,
And hug him into snares. When once her eye
Hath met the virtue of this magic dust,
I shall appear some harmless villager,
Whom thrift keeps up about his country gear.
But here she comes; I fairly step aside,
And hearken, if I may, her business here.

THE LADY *enters.*

Lady. This way the noise was, if mine ear be true—
My best guide now. Methought it was the sound
Of riot and ill-managed merriment,

---

154. *Dazzling.*] Beguiling, illusive. The air is called spungy, because as a sponge holds water so the air held in suspension the magic dust which Comus threw into it.

> His wonder far exceeded reason's reach,
> That he began to doubt his dazzled sight.
> Spenser, *F. Q.* II. xi. 40.

155. *Blear.*] Dim, or rather dimming.

156. *Presentments.*] Representations. So in Shakspeare's *Hamlet*, iii. 4, 'The counterfeit [i.e. copied] presentment of two brothers.'

157. *Quaint habits.*] Curious dress.

161. *Glozing.*] Feigning, pretending, insinuating.

167. *Keeps up, &c.*] Keeps up to this late hour minding his rustic business.

168. *Fairly.*] Gently, softly. So Fletcher, *The Chances*, iii. 4, 'We'll ride on fair and softly.'

171. *Methought.*] It thought me, i.e. I thought. In Chaucer and other old writers we frequently meet with such expressions as *it thinketh me, it thought me*, or *me thinketh, me thought.*

> Madame, quoth he, how thinké you thereby?
> How *that me thinketh*? quoth she.
> Chaucer's *Clerk's Tale.*

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Such as the jocund flute or gamesome pipe
Stirs up among the loose unlettered hinds,
When, for their teeming flocks and granges full,
In wanton dance they praise the bounteous Pan,
And thank the gods amiss. I should be loth
To meet the rudeness and swilled insolence
Of such late wassailers; yet, O, where else
Shall I inform my unacquainted feet
In the blind mazes of this tangled wood?
My brothers, when they saw me wearied out
With this long way, resolving here to lodge
Under the spreading favour of these pines,
Stept, as they said, to the next thicket side,
To bring me berries, or such cooling fruit
As the kind hospitable woods provide.
They left me then when the gray-hooded even,
Like a sad votarist in palmer's weed,
Rose from the hindmost wheels of Phœbus' wain.
But where they are, and why they came not back,

---

175. *Granges full.*] Farms well stored with produce.

176. *Pan.*] The god of universal nature.

> Universal Pan,
> Knit with the Graces and the Hours in dance,
> Led on the eternal Spring.
> *Par. Lost*, iv. 266.

179. *Wassailers.*] Drinking revellers. The wassail-bowl was a bowl of spiced ale carried from door to door at the time of New Year. The word *wassail* is supposed to be from two Saxon words, *waes hael*, i.e. be in health, or, good health to you.

188. *Grey-hooded even, &c.*] Milton here likens the grey evening to a palmer journeying with his face towards the east, as on a pilgrimage to Palestine; and similarly in *Par. Reg.*, iv. 426, he likens the grey morning to a pilgrim returning from the Holy Land.

> Morning fair,
> Came forth with pilgrim steps in amice grey.

By calling the pilgrim *a votarist*, the poet means to represent him as *under a vow* of pilgrimage; and the name *palmer* was derived from the palm branch brought from Palestine by the pilgrim as a token that he had fulfilled his vow.

Compare Shakspeare's *Much Ado, &c.*, v. 8.

> And look, the gentle day
> *Before the wheels of Phœbus*, round about
> Dapples the drowsy east with spots of grey.

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Is now the labour of my thoughts; 'tis likeliest
They had engaged their wandering steps too far,
And envious darkness, ere they could return,
Had stole them from me; else, O thievish night,
Why shouldst thou, but for some felonious end,
In thy dark lantern thus close up the stars
That nature hung in heaven, and filled their lamps
With everlasting oil, to give due light
To the misled and lonely traveller?
This is the place, as well as I may guess,
Whence even now the tumult of loud mirth
Was rife, and perfect in my listening ear;
Yet nought but single darkness do I find.
What might this be? A thousand fantasies
Begin to throng into my memory,
Of calling shapes, and beckoning shadows dire,
And aery tongues that syllable men's names
On sands, and shores, and desert wildernesses.
These thoughts may startle well, but not astound,
The virtuous mind, that ever walks attended
By a strong siding champion, conscience.
O, welcome, pure-eyed Faith, white-handed Hope—
Thou hovering angel, girt with golden wings,—
And thou unblemished form of Chastity!

---

193. *Engaged.*] Ventured, committed.

199. *With everlasting oil.*] So Spenser, *F. Q.*, I. i. 57.

> By this the eternal lamps wherewith high Jove
> Doth light the lower world were half yspent.

208. *That syllable men's names.*] That distinctly utter men's names. In the 'calling *shapes*' and 'beckoning *shadows*' and '*airy* tongues,' we may perceive anticipations of that expressive vagueness which afterwards became so prominent a characteristic of Milton's poetry.

Fletcher, in his *Faithful Shepherdess*, i. 1., speaks of 'voices calling in the dead of night.' Compare what Virgil says (*Æn.* iv. 460) of Dido hearing mysterious voices from the shrine of Sychæus:—

> Hinc exaudiri voces, et verba vocantis
> Visa viri, nox quum terras obscura teneret.

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I see ye visibly, and now believe
That He, the Supreme Good, to whom all things ill
Are but as slavish officers of vengeance,
Would send a glistering guardian, if need were,
To keep my life and honour unassailed.
Was I deceived, or did a sable cloud
Turn forth her silver lining on the night?
I did not err, there does a sable cloud
Turn forth her silver lining on the night,
And casts a gleam over this tufted grove:
I cannot halloo to my brothers, but
Such noise as I can make to be heard farthest
I'll venture; for my new-enlivened spirits
Prompt me; and they perhaps are not far off.

SONG.

Sweet Echo, sweetest nymph, that livest unseen
Within thy aery shell,
By slow Meander's margent green,
And in the violet-embroidered vale
Where the love-lorn nightingale
Nightly to thee her sad song mourneth well:

---

219. *A glistering guardian.*] An allusion to Ps. xci. 11: 'He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.'

227. *Make.*] Cause.

231. *Aery shell.*] Echo is said to live in an aery shell, because of the reverberation of sound which was regarded as her voice. She fell in love with the beautiful youth Narcissus, but his disregard caused her to pine away, and she was transformed into a rock, retaining, however, the power of voice.

232. *Mæander.*] Here put for any slow, winding stream. The Mæander of Asia Minor was remarkable for its numerous windings.

234. *Love-lorn.*] The Saxon word *lorn* means *lost*. The epithet *love-lorn* is here applied to the nightingale in allusion to the story of Philomela, who was so barbarously treated by her sister's husband, Tereus, and who, when fleeing from him, was transformed into a nightingale. Hence it is always as a female that the nightingale is referred to by poets. *See* the sad story of Philomela in Ovid's *Met.*, vi. 438—676.

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Canst thou not tell me of a gentle pair
That likest thy Narcissus are
O, if thou have
Hid them in some flowery cave,
Tell me but where,
Sweet queen of parley, daughter of the sphere!
So may'st thou be translated to the skies,
And give resounding grace to all heaven's harmonies.

Enter COMUS.

Comus. Can any mortal mixture of earth's mould
Breathe such divine enchanting ravishment?
Sure something holy lodges in that breast,
And with these raptures moves the vocal air
To testify his hidden residence.
How sweetly did they float upon the wings
Of silence, through the empty-vaulted night,
At every fall smoothing the raven-down
Of darkness, till it smiled! I have oft heard
My mother Circe with the Sirens three,

---

241. *Queen of parley, &c.*] *Parley* here means mutual discourse. The poet calls Echo 'daughter of the sphere,' i. e., of the atmosphere, as she was the offspring of Aer and Tellus. So, in his poem *At a Solemn Music*,

> Sphere-born harmonious sisters, Voice and Verse,
> Wed your divine sounds.

243. *Give resounding grace, &c.*] Add the graceful effect of echo to the harmony of the spheres.

245. *Divine.*] This word is in antithesis to *mortal*.

246. *Something holy.*] Some holy being. The pronoun *his*, however, in the 248th line, is the old neuter possessive relating to the word *something*. *Sure* is adverbial; *see* Note on *l.* 266.

249. *How sweetly, &c.*] This exquisitely beautiful passage cannot be interpreted: its significance must be felt by imagination. Compare the following references to the nightingale's song:—

> She all night long her amorous descant sung;
> Silence was pleased. *Par. Lost.*
>
> In her sweetest, saddest plight,
> Smoothing the rugged brow of night.
> *Il Penser. 57.*

253. *The Sirens three.*] Leucosia, Lysia, and Parthenope, daughters of the river god Achelous. They resided on a rocky island near the coast of Sicily.

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Amidst the flowery-kirtled Naiades,
Culling their potent herbs and baleful drugs;
Who, as they sung, would take the prisoned soul,
And lap it in Elysium. Scylla wept,
And chid her barking waves into attention,
And fell Charybdis murmured soft applause.
Yet they in pleasing slumber lulled the sense,
And in sweet madness robbed it of itself;
But such a sacred and home-felt delight,
Such sober certainty of waking bliss,
I never heard till now. I'll speak to her,
And she shall be my queen. Hail, foreign wonder!
Whom certain these rough shades did never breed,
Unless the goddess that in rural shrine
Dwell'st here with Pan or Silvan, by blest song
Forbidding every bleak unkindly fog
To touch the prosperous growth of this tall wood.

Lady. Nay, gentle shepherd, ill is lost that praise
That is addressed to unattending ears;
Not any boast of skill, but extreme shift

---

254. *Flowery-kirtled Naiades.*] The Naiads were a numerous tribe of river nymphs. *Flowery-kirtled* means having garments embroidered with flowers. A *kirtle* is a gown.

257. *Lap it.*] Infold or absorb it. *See L'Allegro*, 136. 'Lap me in soft Lydian airs.'

Scylla wept, &c.] This nymph was the rival of Circe in the affections of the sea god Glaucus, and, through the malice of the sorceress, was transformed into a monster having barking dogs continually clinging around her; but she was afterwards changed by Glaucus into the rock Scylla, the stormy waters around which are here called by the poet 'barking waves.' Charybdis was a whirlpool on the Sicilian coast opposite Scylla.

266. *Certain.*] An abridgement of the preposition phrase *for certain truth*, and therefore an adverb. Adjectives are often rendered adverbial in this way: compare *slow*, meaning *at a slow rate, sure = in sure reality*, &c. See *ll.* 246, 482, 493.

267. *Unless the goddess.*] Unless thou beest the goddess.

268. *Silvan.*] Silvanus, a rural deity who had guardianship of fields and cattle,

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How to regain my severed company,
Compelled me to awake the courteous Echo
To give me answer from her mossy couch.

Comus. What chance, good lady, hath bereft you thus?

Lady. Dim darkness, and this leafy labyrinth.

Comus. Could that divide you from near-ushering guides?

Lady. They left me weary on a grassy turf.

Comus. By falsehood, or discourtesy, or why?

Lady. To seek i' the valley some cool friendly spring.

Comus. And left your fair side all unguarded, lady?

Lady. They were but twain, and purposed quick return.

Comus. Perhaps forestalling night prevented them.

Lady. How easy my misfortune is to hit!

Comus. Imports their loss beside the present need?

Lady. No less than if I should my brothers lose.

Comus. Were they of manly prime, or youthful bloom?

Lady. As smooth as Hebe's their unrazored lips.

Comus. Two such I saw, what time the laboured ox
In his loose traces from the furrow came,
And the swinkt hedger at his supper sat;
I saw them under a green mantling vine,

---

286. *Imports their loss, &c.*] Does your loss of them signify anything more than that of protectors for the occasion.

290. *Hebe.*] The goddess of perpetual youth. She was the celestial cupbearer until superseded in her office by the Trojan youth Ganymede. The epithet *unrazored* is an instance of Milton's pretty frequent use of undignified expressions.

291. *What time.*] At what time. The phrase introduces an adverbial clause, and is one of common occurrence in poetry.

293. *Swinkt.*] Hard-wrought. So, in Spenser's *Faerie Queene*. 'For which men swink and sweat incessantly,' II. vii. 8. 'For which he long in vain did sweat and swink,' VI. iv. 32. Also in Chaucer's *Merchant's Tale*, 'If he be poor, she helpeth him to swink;' and in his *Prologue of the Canon's Yeman*, 'I am not wont in no mirror to pry, But swinke sore, &c.

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That crawls along the side of yon small hill,
Plucking ripe clusters from the tender shoots.
Their port was more than human as they stood:
I took it for a faery vision
Of some gay creatures of the element,
That in the colours of the rainbow live,
And play i' the plighted clouds. I was awe-struck,
And, as I passed, I worshipped; — if those you seek,
It were a journey like the path to heaven
To help you find them.
Lady. Gentle villager,
What readiest way would bring me to that place?
Comus. Due west it rises from this shrubby point.
Lady. To find that out, good shepherd, I suppose,
In such a scant allowance of star-light,
Would overtask the best land-pilot's art,
Without the sure guess of well-practised feet.
Comus. I know each lane, and every alley green,
Dingle, or bushy dell, of this wild wood,

---

299. *The element.*] The sky. So in *Par. Lost.*

> The louring element
> Scowls o'er the darkened landskip snow or shower. ii. 490.

'There hath been strange things seen in the element.' Latimer's *Sermon on 2nd Sunday in Advent.*

301. *Plighted clouds.*] That is, clouds interwoven or forming chains, as if *plaited.* To *plight* means originally to twist or plait: hence its more modern signification, to bind, pledge, or engage, by joining hands.

303. *Like the path, &c.*] That is, difficult as that path of which the Scripture says, 'few there be that find it.' Matt. vii. 14. The verb *were* is here the past potential for *would be.* *See* Note on *l.* 394.

304. *To help you find them.*] The infinitive without *to* is according to Anglo-Saxon use; and in modern English *to* is omitted after certain verbs, as *may, can, must, bid, hear, &c.;* its omission after the verb *help* is not now usual in written language, though it is common in conversation. *See l.* 623.

307. *That.*] Namely, the direction of due west.

312. *Dingle.*] A narrow valley between steep hills; a dale or dell is not so deep as a dingle. Drayton, in his Muses' Elys. 2nd Nymphal, speaks of 'Dingles deep and mountains hoar.'

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And every bosky bourn from side to side,—
My daily walks and ancient neighbourhood;
And if your stray attendance be yet lodged
Or shroud within these limits, I shall know
Ere morrow wake, or the low-roosted lark
From her thatched pallet rouse; if otherwise,
I can conduct you, lady, to a low
But loyal cottage, where you may be safe
Till further quest.

Lady. Shepherd, I take thy word,
And trust thy honest-offered courtesy,
Which oft is sooner found in lowly sheds
With smoky rafters, than in tapestry halls
And courts of princes, where it first was named
And yet is most pretended. In a place
Less warranted than this, or less secure,
I cannot be, that I should fear to change it.
Eye me, blest Providence, and square my trial
To my proportioned strength! Shepherd, lead on.

[*Exeunt.*

Enter THE TWO BROTHERS.

El. Br. Unmuffle, ye faint stars; and thou, fair moon,
That wont'st to love the traveller's benison,

---

313. *Bosky bourn.*] Brook bordered with trees or bushes. Ital. *bosco*, a wood or thicket. *Bourn* literally means boundary, from the French *borne*, a limit or landmark.

> And ere the sun had climbed the eastern hills,
> To gild the muttering bourns and petty rills.
> Browne's *Britannia's Pastorals*, iv. 4.

315. *Attendance.*] Attendants.

> Nay, lead the way, my lord,
> I'm part of your attendance.
> Shirley's *Humorous Courtier*, iv.

325. *Where it first was named, &c.*] This is from Spenser:—

> Of court, it seems, men courtesy do call,
> For that it there most useth to abound.
> *F. Q.* VI. i. 1.

331. *Thou fair Moon, &c.*] So Spenser (*F. Q.*, III. i. 43), speaking of the clouded moon:—

> Where she may find the substance thin and light,
> Breaks forth her silver beams, and her bright head
> Discovers to the world discomfited;
> Of the poor traveller that went astray
> With thousand blessings she is herried
> [i. e. praised.]

Compare also *The Masque*, Act i. of Fletcher's *Maid's Tragedy*:—

> Appear; no longer thy pale visage shroud,
> But strike thy silver horns quite through a cloud.

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Stoop thy pale visage through an amber cloud,
And disinherit chaos, that reigns here
In double night of darkness and of shades;
Or, if your influence be quite dammed up
With black usurping mists, some gentle taper,
Though a rush-candle from the wicker hole
Of some clay habitation, visit us
With thy long-levelled rule of streaming light;
And thou shalt be our star of Arcady,
Or Tyrian Cynosure.

Sec. Br. Or, if our eyes
Be barred that happiness, might we but hear
The folded flocks penned in their wattled cotes,
Or sound of pastoral reed with oaten stops,
Or whistle from the lodge, or village cock
Count the night watches to his feathery dames,
'T would be some solace yet, some little cheering,
In this close dungeon of innumerous boughs.

---

334. *Disinherit.*] Dispossess. *Inherit* was formerly often used in the sense of simply possessing. The verb here ought perhaps to be considered plural, that is, to have for its subject *ye*, Stars and Moon, as referred to by the pronoun *your* in the 336th line.

337. *Taper.*] A vocative or a nominative of address.

341. *Be our star of Arcady, &c.*] Be to us as the greater or the lesser bear star. Callisto, the daughter of Lycaon, king of Arcadia, being transformed by Jupiter into a she-bear, was hunted by her son Arcas, and when he was on the point of killing her, the god translated them to the skies, making Callisto the Great Bear, and Arcas the Little Bear, or Boötes, which was called also Cynosura from its resemblance to a dog's tail. (Greek κυνὸς οὐρά.) The Ursa Major was called also Charles's Wain or Helice; its two foremost stars are the pointers to the polar star, or last star of the Cynosure. The mariners of Tyre and Sidon directed their course by the Ursa Minor, the Greeks by the Ursa Major; hence Ovid says:—

Quarum Cynosura petatur
Sidoniis, Helicen, Graia carina notet.
Fasti, iii. 107.

345. *Oaten stops.*] The shepherd's pipe, being at first a row of oaten stalks, was afterwards often called the oaten pipe, though of different material.

346. *The lodge.*] The shepherd's lodge.

349. *Innumerous.*] This word

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But, O, that hapless virgin, our lost sister!
Where may she wander now, whither betake her
From the chill dew, among rude burs and thistles?
Perhaps some cold bank is her bolster now,
Or, 'gainst the rugged bark of some broad elm
Leans her unpillowed head, fraught with sad fears.
What, if in wild amazement and affright?
Or, while we speak, within the direful grasp
Of savage hunger, or of savage heat?
El. Br. Peace, brother; be not over exquisite
To cast the fashion of uncertain evils:
For, grant they be so; while they rest unknown,
What need a man forestall his date of grief,
And run to meet what he would most avoid?
Or if they be but false alarms of fear,
How bitter is such self-delusion!
I do not think my sister so to seek,

---

is formed directly from the Latin adjective *innumerus*, innumerable.

355. *Leans her unpillowed head.*] The context requires *leans* to be an intransitive verb, and *head* its nominative.

356. *What.*] A common interrogative exclamation, nominative to some such expression as *is there* or *is to be done*. The substantive verb is also understood after *if*: what if *she be* in a state of wild amazement, &c.

358. *Savage hunger.*] Viz., that of some wild beast.

360. *To cast the fashion.*] To conjecture the particular form.

361. *Grant they be so.*] Allow that the evils are really as you imagine.

262. *What need a man forestall.*] Wherefore need a man anticipate. *What* here is used as the Latin *quid*, and is objective to *for* understood; it is adverbial to the verb *need*. Compare *l.* 752. The usage is common in old writers. 'What need we such preachings every day?' Latimer's *Sermon on the Marr. of the King's Son.* 'What should I telle each proportion?' Chaucer's *Prol. of the Canon's Yeman.* 'But what do I their names seek to rehearse?' Spenser's *F. Q.* IV. xi. 17. 'What talk you of the posy or the value?' Shaksp. *Merch. of Ven.* v. 1. 'What sit we then projecting peace and war?' *Par. Lost*, ii. 329. 'What need'st thou such weak witness of thy name?' Milton's *Epitaph on Shakspeare.*

366. *To seek.*] At a loss. So, in Bacon's *Essay of Usury*, 'The

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Or so unprincipled in virtue's book,
And the sweet peace that goodness bosoms ever,
As that the single want of light and noise
(Not being in danger, as I trust she is not)
Could stir the constant mood of her calm thoughts,
And put them into misbecoming plight.
Virtue could see to do what virtue would
By her own radiant light, though sun and moon
Were in the flat sea sunk. And wisdom's self
Oft seeks to sweet retired solitude;
Where, with her best nurse, contemplation,
She plumes her feathers, and lets grow her wings,
That in the various bustle of resort
Were all to-ruffled, and sometimes impaired.
He that has light within his own clear breast
May sit i' the centre, and enjoy bright day;
But he that hides a dark soul and foul thoughts,
Benighted walks under the mid-day sun;

---

merchant will be to seek for money;' and in his *Advancement of Learning, Bk. I.*, 'Men bred in learning are perhaps to seek in points of convenience,' &c.

367. *Unprincipled.*] Unestablished, unschooled.

373. *Virtue could see, &c.*] So, in Spenser's *F. Q.* I. i. 12, 'Virtue gives herself light through darkness for to wade.'

376. *Seeks to.*] Repairs or goes voluntarily to. The expression occurs in Scripture several times. 'They shall seek to the idols,' &c. Isai. xix. 3. *See* also viii. 19; xi. 10; Deut. xii. 5, &c.

378. *All to-ruffled.*] It has been wrongly supposed that in such phrases *all-to* is to be regarded as an adverb signifying *quite*. The *to* belongs to the verb, as an augment much used in old English, to give intensifying force to the verb.

Mote thy wicked necke be to-broke.
Chaucer, *Prol. Wife of Bath.*
The pot to-breaketh, and farewell, all is go.' Do. *Prol. Canon's Yeman.*
The wolf hath many a sheep and lamb to-rent. Do. *Doctor's Tale.*
Then let them all encircle him about,
And, fairy-like, to-pinch the unclean knight.
Shaksp. *Merry Wives*, iv. 4,

Very often *all*, as an adverb, meaning *quite*, precedes this form:—

He slowe and all to-rent the lion.
Chaucer, *Monk's Tale.*

In Spenser's *Faerie Queene* we have:—

With briers and bushes all to-rent and scratcht. IV. vii. 8.
Though nothing whole, but all to-brust and broken. V. viii. 44.
Made of strange stuff, but all to-worn and ragged. V. ix. 10.

And in Scripture (*Judg.* ix. 53), we have 'and all to-brake his skull.'

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Himself is his own dungeon.

Sec. Br. 'T is most true,
That musing meditation most affects
The pensive secrecy of desert cell,
Far from the cheerful haunt of men and herds,
And sits as safe as in a senate-house;
For who would rob a hermit of his weeds,
His few books, or his beads, or maple dish,
Or do his gray hairs any violence?
But beauty, like the fair Hesperian tree
Laden with blooming gold, had need the guard
Of dragon watch with unenchanted eye,
To save her blossoms and defend her fruit

---

385. *His own dungeon.*] So Samson, in the *Samson Agonistes*, 102, calls himself his own sepulchre.

386. *Most affects.*] Is most inclined to; seeks most. *To affect*, from the Lat. *affecto*, formerly meant to be bent on, or have an affection for; but, like the verb *to pretend*, it has come to have a different sense.

'Use also such persons as affect the business wherein they are employed.' Bacon's *47th Essay*.

'He affected the crown for himself.' Fuller's *Holy War*, ii. 41.

'Good things, if of long continuance, grow tedious, being rather affected for their variety than true worth.' *Ibid.* iv. 14.

The word was sometimes used causatively, as in Massinger's *New Way to Pay, &c.*, iii. 2, 'The gown affects me not,' that is, does not cause my liking, does not please me or take my fancy. So in Shirley's *Humorous Courtier*, v.:

But make your choice, which best affecteth you.

393. *Hesperian tree.*] The Hesperides, or daughters of Hesperus, viz., Aegle, Erythia, and Arethusa, dwelt in the remotest region of the west. In their gardens was a famous tree with golden apples, watched by a dragon; and it was one of the labours of Hercules to obtain that treasure. Milton, towards the conclusion of Comus (*l.* 981), makes the gardens 'of Hesperus and his daughters three' a part of the region of Elysium.

394. *Had need the guard.*] That is, of the guard. The verb *had* is here a form of the past potential, equivalent to *would have*. The verb *were* is, in like manner, often used for *would be* or *should be*. *See ll.* 303, 548.

395. *With unenchanted eye.*] With eyes that cannot be beguiled or lulled asleep by enchantment. This phrase is adjectival to the noun *dragon*, here used for *dragon's*.

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From the rash hand of bold incontinence.
You may as well spread out the unsunned heaps
Of miser's treasures by an outlaw's den,
And tell me it is safe, as bid me hope
Danger will wink on opportunity,
And let a single helpless maiden pass
Uninjured in this wild surrounding waste.
Of night, or loneliness, it recks me not;
I fear the dread events that dog them both,
Lest some ill-greeting touch attempt the person
Of our unowned sister.
El. Br. I do not, brother,
Infer, as if I thought my sister's state
Secure, without all doubt or controversy;
Yet, where an equal poise of hope and fear
Does arbitrate the event, my nature is
That I incline to hope rather than fear,
And gladly banish squint suspicion.
My sister is not so defenceless left
As you imagine; she has a hidden strength
Which you remember not.
Sec. Br. What hidden strength,—
Unless the strength of Heaven, if you mean that?
El. Br. I mean that too, but yet a hidden strength,
Which, if Heaven gave it, may be termed her own:
'Tis chastity, my brother, chastity:
She that has that is clad in complete steel,

---

404. *Of night or loneliness, &c.*] This refers to *l.* 369. The phrase *it recks me not* is an old form for *I reck not*, i.e., I make no account. *See* Note on *l.* 171.

413. *Squint suspicion.*] So Spenser describes *Suspect* as 'Under his eyebrows looking still askance.' *F. Q.*, III. xii. 15.

418. *I mean that too.*] What I mean may be called also the strength of Heaven.

421. *Complete steel.*] A panoply of steel. The phrase occurs also in Shakspeare's *Hamlet* (i. 4) and with the accent, as here, on the first syllable of *complete*. In Milton's later poetry the word *complete* is accented on the second syllable.

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And, like a quivered nymph with arrows keen,
May trace huge forests, and unharboured heaths,
Infamous hills, and sandy perilous wilds;
Where, through the sacred rays of chastity,
No savage fierce, bandit, or mountaineer,
Will dare to soil her virgin purity:
Yea, there where very desolation dwells,
By grots and caverns shagged with horrid shades,
She may pass on with unblenched majesty,
Be it not done in pride, or in presumption.
Some say, no evil thing that walks by night,
In fog or fire, by lake or moorish fen,
Blue meagre hag, or stubborn unlaid ghost
That breaks his magic chains at curfew time,
No goblin, or swart faery of the mine,
Hath hurtful power o'er true virginity.

---

423. *Unharboured heaths, &c.*] The word *unharboured* means having no retreat or shelter. *Infamous hills*, i.e., hills noted for danger; an expression probably suggested by Horace's *Infames scopulos.* Od. I. iii. 20.

425. *Rays of chastity.*] *See* Note on *l.* 782.

429. *Horrid.*] Bristling, rugged. Compare Pope's *Eloïs. Abel.* 20, 'Ye grots and caverns shagged with horrid thorn.'

430. *Unblenched.*] Undaunted. To *blench* is to shrink or cause to shrink.

435. *At curfew time.*] At the close of the day, as announced by the curfew bell, when ghosts, &c., were permitted to be at large till the time of cock-crowing.

436. *Swart faëry of the mine.*] It was believed among miners that mines were haunted by a particular kind of spirits that pretended to work like the miners themselves. In the Scandinavian mythology, the underground spirits were called the *Svartalfar*, i.e., black alfs or elves.

437. *Hath hurtful power, &c.*] In Fletcher's *Faithful Shepherdess*, i. 1, Clorin, reflecting on the adoration paid to her by the Satyr, says:

> What greatness or what private hidden power
> Is there in me to draw submission
> From this rude man and beast? . . .
> Yet I have heard (my mother told it me,
> And now I do believe it) if I keep
> My virgin flower uncropt, pure, chaste, and fair,
> No goblin, wood-god, fairy, elf, or fiend,
> Satyr, or other power that haunts the groves,
> Shall hurt my body, or by vain illusion
> Draw me to wander after idle fires;
> Or voices calling me in dead of night,
> To make me follow, and so tole me on
> Through mire and standing pools to find my ruin.
> Else why should this rough thing . . .
> Thus mildly kneel to me? Sure there's a power
> In that great name *of virgin*, that binds fast
> All rude uncivil bloods, all appetites,
> That break their confines. Then, strong chastity,
> Be thou my strongest guard, &c.

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Do ye believe me yet, or shall I call
Antiquity from the old schools of Greece
To testify the arms of chastity?
Hence had the huntress Dian her dread bow,
Fair silver-shafted queen, for ever chaste,
Wherewith she tamed the brinded lioness
And spotted mountain-pard, but set at nought
The frivolous bolt of Cupid; gods and men
Feared her stern frown, and she was queen of the woods.
What was that snaky-headed Gorgon shield
That wise Minerva wore, unconquered virgin,
Wherewith she freezed her foes to congealed stone,
But rigid looks of chaste austerity,
And noble grace that dashed brute violence
With sudden adoration and blank awe?
So dear to Heaven is saintly chastity,
That, when a soul is found sincerely so,
A thousand liveried angels lackey her,
Driving far off each thing of sin and guilt,
And, in clear dream and solemn vision,
Tell her of things that no gross ear can hear;
Till oft converse with heavenly habitants
Begin to cast a beam on the outward shape,

---

453. *So dear to Heaven, &c.*] So Spenser (*F. Q.*, III. viii. 29.):

> But, sith that none of all her knights is nigh,
> See how the heavens, of voluntary grace,
> And sovereign favour towards chastity,
> Do succour send to her distressed case:
> So much High God doth innocence embrace!

The word *so*, in *l.* 454, is ungrammatical.

455. *Lackey her.*] A lackey was a foot-boy who ran or walked by the side of his master.

> O that our power
> Could lackie or keep wing with our desires!
> Marston, *Prol. to Antonio's Revenge.*

> Kings lackeying by his triumphal chariot.
> Massinger's *Virgin Martyr*, i. 1.

> To drive you so on foot, unfit to tread
> And lackey by him, 'gainst all womanhead.
> Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, VI. ii. 15.

463. *Oft.*] Here an adjective signifying *frequent*, as it does in the expressions, *oft-times*, *many a time and oft*, &c. The adverb *oft*, or *often* is, indeed, an abridgment of the preposition phrase *at oft*, or *often*, *times*.

> The jolly wassail walks the *often* round.
> B. Jonson's *Forest*, 3.

> '*Often* infirmities.' 1 Tim. v. 23.

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The unpolluted temple of the mind,
And turns it by degrees to the soul's essence,
Till all be made immortal. But when lust,
By unchaste looks, loose gestures, and foul talk,
But most by lewd and lavish act of sin,
Lets in defilement to the inward parts,
The soul grows clotted by contagion,
Imbodies and imbrutes, till she quite lose
The divine property of her first being.
Such are those thick and gloomy shadows damp,
Oft seen in charnel vaults and sepulchres,
Lingering and sitting by a new-made grave,
As loth to leave the body that it loved,
And linked itself by carnal sensuality
To a degenerate and degraded state.

Sec. Br. How charming is divine philosophy!
Not harsh and crabbed, as dull fools suppose;
But musical as is Apollo's lute,
And a perpetual feast of nectared sweets,
Where no crude surfeit reigns.

El. Br. List, list; I hear
Some far-off halloo break the silent air.

Sec. Br. Methought so too; what should it be?

El Br. For certain
Either some one like us night-foundered here,

---

468. *Imbodies and imbrutes, &c.*] Becomes carnal and brutish. Milton is here reproducing a portion of the philosophy of Plato's *Phædo*, 69, in which Socrates is describing souls that have so cultivated communion with the body, and served and loved it, and been bewitched by it through desires and pleasures, as to have become contaminated, impregnated with that which is corporeal, and thus at the death of the body rendered unfit to soar to heaven, but weighed down to earth, and wandering as shadowy visible phantoms amongst monuments and tombs.

473. *That it loved.*] The pronoun *it* refers to the soul, but is rather awkwardly involved in syntax with the noun *shadows*.

482. *For certain.*] *See* Note on *l.* 266.

483. *Night-foundered.*] Confounded or overpowered by dark-

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Or else some neighbour woodman; or, at worst,
Some roving robber calling to his fellows.
Sec. Br. Heaven keep my sister. Again, again, and near!
Best draw, and stand upon our guard.
El. Br. I'll halloo:
If he be friendly, he comes well; if not,
Defence is a good cause, and Heaven be for us.

Enter THE ATTENDANT SPIRIT, *habited like a Shepherd.*

That halloo I should know; what are you? speak;
Come not too near; you fall on iron stakes else.
Spir. What voice is that? my young lord? speak again.
Sec. Br. O brother, 'tis my father's shepherd, sure.
El. Br. Thyrsis? whose artful strains have oft delayed
The huddling brook to hear his madrigal,
And sweetened every musk-rose of the dale?
How camest thou here, good swain? hath any ram
Slipt from the fold, or young kid lost his dam,
Or straggling wether the pent flock forsook?
How couldst thou find this dark sequestered nook?
Spir. O my loved master's heir, and his next joy,
I came not here on such a trivial toy
As a strayed ewe, or to pursue the stealth
Of pilfering wolf; not all the fleecy wealth
That doth enrich these downs is worth a thought
To this my errand, and the care it brought.
But, O my virgin lady, where is she?

---

ness. So, in *Par. Lost*, i. 204:

'The pilot of some small night-foundered bark.'

'They were bred in such soft employments, that they were presently foundered.' Fuller's *Holy War*, ii. 40.

501. *His next joy.*] This refers to the second brother.

506. *The care it brought.*] The anxiety it involved.

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How chance she is not in your company?
El. Br. To tell thee sadly, shepherd, without blame
Or our neglect, we lost her as we came.
Spir. Ay me unhappy! then my fears are true.
El. Br. What fears, good Thyrsis? Pr'ythee briefly shew.
Spir. I'll tell ye: 'Tis not vain or fabulous
(Though so esteemed by shallow ignorance)
What the sage poets, taught by the heavenly muse,
Storied of old, in high immortal verse,
Of dire chimeras, and enchanted isles,
And rifted rocks whose entrance leads to hell;
For such there be, but unbelief is blind.
Within the navel of this hideous wood,
Immured in cypress shades a sorcerer dwells,—
Of Bacchus and of Circe born, great Comus,
Deep skilled in all his mother's witcheries,—
And here to every thirsty wanderer
By sly enticement gives his baneful cup,
With many murmurs mixed, whose pleasing poison
The visage quite transforms of him that drinks,

---

508. *How chance.*] How happens it. The word *chance* in old authors often means *it chances* or *happens*.

> If chance the radiant sun, with farewell sweet,
> Extend his evening beam.
> *Par. Lost*, ii. 492.

> How chance you went not with Master Slender?
> Shakspeare's *Merry Wives*, v. 4.

'How chance you go not to the service upon the holy-days?' Latimer's *Sermon on 1st Sund. after Epiph.*

509. *Sadly.*] Truly or seriously.

511. *Ay me.*] This is the original form of the exclamation *ah me*! and is of common occurrence in the old writers.

517. *Dire chimeras.*] *See Par. Lost*, ii. 628. The Chimæra was a fire-vomiting monster, slain by Bellerophon.

518. *Rifted rocks.*] In Greece, the entrance to hell was supposed to be by a deep gloomy cavern near the promontory Tænarus, the southern extremity of the country. In Italy, a cave near the Campanian lake Avernus had the same reputation.

520. *Navel.*] Heart, or midst: a Grecian use of the word. Pindar calls Apollo's temple at Delphi the navel of the earth.

526. *With many murmurs.*] That is, with many muttered incantations.

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And the inglorious likeness of a beast
Fixes instead, unmoulding reason's mintage
Charactered in the face: this have I learned
Tending my flocks hard by i' the hilly crofts
That brow this bottom-glade; whence night by night
He and his monstrous rout are heard to howl,
Like stabled wolves, or tigers at their prey,
Doing abhorred rites to Hecate
In their obscured haunts of inmost bowers.
Yet have they many baits and guileful spells,
To inveigle and invite the unwary sense
Of them that pass unweeting by the way.
This evening late, by then the chewing flocks
Had ta'en their supper on the savoury herb
Of knot-grass dew-besprent, and were in fold,
I sat me down to watch upon a bank
With ivy canopied, and interwove
With flaunting honeysuckle, and began,
Rapt in a pleasing fit of melancholy,
To meditate my rural minstrelsy,
Till fancy had her fill; but, ere a close,
The wonted roar was up amidst the woods,

---

529. *Unmoulding reason's mintage, &c.*] Removing that stamp of reason with which the human countenance is impressed.

532. *Brow.*] Rise above, overhang.

540. *This evening late, &c.*] The word *late* here means lately, shortly before this. *By then* means *by the time that;* but the object of the preposition *by* is the whole of the noun sentence following it. *Chewing* here signifies *ruminating.*

542. *Besprent.*] Sprinkled.

547. *To meditate.*] To devote my mind to. This application of the word to music is derived from Virgil, *Ecl.* i. 2.

Silvestrem tenui musam meditaris avena.

It occurs also in the *Lycidas*, 66,

And strictly meditate the thankless muse.

Lord Macaulay, in his *Hist. of England*, applies the word to Milton himself, as having 'meditated a song so divine and holy, &c.'

548. *Had.*] Should have. *See* Note on *l.* 394.

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And filled the air with barbarous dissonance;
At which I ceased, and listened them awhile,
Till an unusual stop of sudden silence
Gave respite to the drowsy-frighted steeds
That draw the litter of close-curtained sleep;
At last, a soft and solemn-breathing sound
Rose like a steam of rich distilled perfumes,
And stole upon the air, that even silence
Was took ere she was ware, and wished she might
Deny her nature and be never more,
Still to be so displaced. I was all ear,
And took in strains that might create a soul
Under the ribs of death: but, O! ere long,
Too well I did perceive it was the voice
Of my most honoured lady, your dear sister.
Amazed I stood, harrowed with grief and fear;
And, O poor hapless nightingale, thought I,
How sweet thou sing'st, how near the deadly snare!
Then down the lawns I ran with headlong haste,
Through paths and turnings often trod by day,
Till, guided by mine ear, I found the place
Where that damned wizard, hid in sly disguise
(For so by certain signs I knew), had met
Already, ere my best speed could prevent,

---

550. *Barbarous dissonance.*] Sounds that were rudely discordant with the 'rural minstrelsy' of Thyrsis. *See Par. Lost*, vii. 30–33.

553. *Drowsy-frighted.*] In a state of drowsy agitation; frighted as one who, when drowsy, is disturbed by noise.

557. *Silence was took, &c.*] *See* Note on *l.* 249.

560. *Still.*] Always. To be absorbed perpetually in such sounds.

All ear.] All given to listening. *All* is an adjective defining *I;* and *ear* is an appositive noun explaining *I.*

561. *Create a soul, &c.*] Inspire life into the dead.

567. *How near, &c.*] Being so near. The construction is: How sweet thou how near the deadly snare singest.

572. *By certain signs.*] *See l.* 644–5.

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The aidless innocent lady, his wished prey;
Who gently asked if he had seen such two,
Supposing him some neighbour villager.
Longer I durst not stay, but soon I guessed
Ye were the two she meant; with that I sprung
Into swift flight, till I had found you here;
But farther know I not.
Sec. Br. O night, and shades!
How are ye joined with hell in triple knot
Against the unarmed weakness of one virgin,
Alone and helpless! Is this the confidence
You gave me, brother?
El. Br. Yes, and keep it still;
Lean on it safely; not a period
Shall be unsaid for me: against the threats
Of malice, or of sorcery, or that power
Which erring men call chance, this I hold firm:
Virtue may be assailed, but never hurt,
Surprised by unjust force, but not inthralled;
Yea, even that which mischief meant most harm
Shall in the happy trial prove most glory;
But evil on itself shall back recoil,
And mix no more with goodness; when at last,
Gathered like scum and settled to itself,
It shall be in eternal restless change
Self-fed and self-consumed: if this fail,
The pillared firmament is rottenness,
And earth's base built on stubble. But come, let's on.

---

575. *Such two.*] Two persons of some sort.

585. *Not a period, &c.*] Not a sentence of what I said shall be unsaid for my part.

591. *Meant.*] Designed to be.

598. *The pillared firmament, &c.*] The notion here expressed by Milton supposes the universe to be a temple, of which the firmament is the roof and earth the base. So in *Par. Reg.*, iv. 455,

As dangerous to the pillared frame of heaven,
Or to the earth's dark basis underneath.

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Against the opposing will and arm of Heaven
May never this just sword be lifted up;
But, for that damned magician, let him be girt
With all the grisly legions that troop
Under the sooty flag of Acheron,
Harpies and Hydras, or all the monstrous forms
'Twixt Africa and Ind, I'll find him out,
And force him to return his purchase back,
Or drag him by the curls to a foul death,
Cursed as his life.

Spir. Alas! good venturous youth,
I love thy courage yet, and bold emprise;
But here thy sword can do thee little stead;
Far other arms and other weapons must
Be those that quell the might of hellish charms:
He with his bare wand can unthread thy joints,
And crumble all thy sinews.

---

603. *Legions.*] Here a trisyllable, in accordance with Latin pronunciation. Such words as *ocean*, *conscience*, *contagion*, are often thus divided in our old poetry. But this happens most frequently with the termination *-ion*, and especially at the end of a line, forming there, in heroic verse, the fifth foot by means of two short or unaccented syllables; of which about a dozen instances occur in Comus. In Shakspeare and Ben Jonson this termination is very rarely substituted as a trochee for an iambus in the middle of a line: Craik, in his *English of Shakspeare* (*Additions, &c.*, p. xxvii.), commenting on *l.* 246 of the *Julius Cæsar*, refers to a single example of this rarity in Shakspeare: it is in *As you like it*, ii. 2, 'With *observation*, the which he vents;' to which we may add another from *Henry VIII.* ii. 4, 'Whilst our *commission* from Rome is read.' In Spenser and Massinger we have frequently such lines as the following:—

> With such swift *motion* from deck to deck.
> Let not your *passion* so far transport you.
> Massinger's *Unnatural Combat*, i. 1.
> Unto her happy *mansion* attain.
> Spenser's *F. Q.* II. iii. 41.

606. *'Twixt Africa and Ind.*] Africa and India, when little known, were regarded as the abodes of the strangest creatures. 'This is stranger than an Afric monster.' Beaumont & Fletcher's *Scornful Lady*, v. 3. 'I've been i' the Indies twice, and have seen strange things. Fletcher's *Rule a Wife, &c.*, i. 1.

610. *Yet.*] Nevertheless. *Emprise* means enterprise.

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El. Br. Why, pr'ythee, shepherd,
How durst thou then thyself approach so near
As to make this relation?
Spir. Care, and utmost shifts,
How to secure the lady from surprisal,
Brought to my mind a certain shepherd lad,
Of small regard to see to, yet well skilled
In every virtuous plant and healing herb
That spreads her verdant leaf to the morning ray;
He loved me well, and oft would beg me sing:
Which when I did, he on the tender grass
Would sit and hearken even to ecstasy;
And in requital ope his leathern scrip,
And shew me simples of a thousand names,
Telling their strange and vigorous faculties.
Amongst the rest, a small unsightly root,
But of divine effect, he culled me out;
The leaf was darkish, and had prickles on it,
But in another country, as he said,
Bore a bright golden flower, but not in this soil:
Unknown, and like esteemed; and the dull swain
Treads on it daily with his clouted shoon:

---

617. *As to make, &c.*] As to be able to make this report about our sister. *Care* is anxiety or solicitude.

620. *To see to.*] To outward appearance.

621. *Virtuous.*] Potent, possessing efficacy. So in *Il Penseroso*, 113, 'The virtuous ring.' In Spenser's *Faerie Queene* (II. xii. 26), the palmer has a *virtuous staff* that calms the sea. In Fletcher's *Faithful Shepherdess*, we have the word very frequently thus used.

623. *Beg me sing.*] *See* Note on *l.* 304.

634. *Like esteemed.*] The word *like* has reference to the prefix in the word *unknown*; as little esteemed as known, that is, *un*-esteemed.

635. *Clouted shoon.*] So in Shakspeare's 2 *Henry VI.* iv. 3,

> We will not leave one lord, one gentleman;
> Spare none but such as go in clouted shoon.

Clouted shoes were worn by rustics, and were so called from having thin plates of iron on the soles.

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And yet more med'cinal is it than that Moly
That Hermes once to wise Ulysses gave.
He called it Hæmony, and gave it me,
And bade me keep it as of sovereign use
'Gainst all enchantments, mildew, blast, or damp,
Or ghastly furies' apparition.
I pursed it up, but little reckoning made,
Till now that this extremity compelled:
But now I find it true; for by this means
I knew the foul enchanter though disguised,
Entered the very lime-twigs of his spells,
And yet came off: if you have this about you
(As I will give you when we go), you may
Boldly assault the necromancer's hall;
Where if he be, with dauntless hardihood
And brandished blade rush on him; break his glass,
And shed the luscious liquor on the ground;
But seize his wand; though he and his cursed crew
Fierce signs of battle make, and menace high,
Or like the sons of Vulcan vomit smoke,
Yet will they soon retire if he but shrink.

El. Br. Thyrsis, lead on apace, I'll follow thee;
And some good angel bear a shield before us.

---

636. *Moly.*] A plant, so called by the gods, having a black root and a white flower; Massinger, in *The City Madam*, iii. 3, calls it *Hermes' Moly*, because it was given by *Mercury* to Ulysses, as an antidote for the poison of Circe. *See* Homer's *Odyss.* x. 305; and Ovid's *Met.* xiv. 291.

638. *Hæmony.*] That is, Thessalian root; Hæmonia being an ancient name of Thessaly. Ovid (*Met.* vii. 264) represents Medea as using Hæmonian plants in her magical preparations:—

Illic Hæmonia radices in valle resectas
Seminaque, et flores, et succos incoquit acres.

642. *Little reckoning made.*] Made little account of it; did not reckon much upon what was said of it.

651. *Rush on him.*] Mercury enjoined Ulysses to rush at Circe with his sword, as if intending to kill her, and foretold that she would thus be overcome.

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The scene changes to a stately palace, set out with all manner of deliciousness; soft music; tables spread with all dainties. COMUS *appears with his rabble, and* THE LADY *set in an enchanted chair, to whom he offers his glass, which she puts by, and goes about to rise.*

Comus. Nay, lady, sit; if I but wave this wand,
Your nerves are all chained up in alabaster,
And you a statue; or as Daphne was
Root-bound that fled Apollo.
Lady. Fool, do not boast;
Thou canst not touch the freedom of my mind
With all thy charms, although this corporal rind
Thou hast immanacled, while Heaven sees good.
Comus. Why are you vexed, lady? Why do you frown?
Here dwell no frowns, nor anger; from these gates
Sorrow flies far: see, here be all the pleasures
That fancy can beget on youthful thoughts,
When the fresh blood grows lively, and returns
Brisk as the April buds in primrose season.
And first, behold this cordial julep here,
That flames and dances in his crystal bounds,
With spirits of balm and fragrant syrups mixed:—
Not that Nepenthes, which the wife of Thone

661. *Daphne.*] This daughter of the river god Peneus, while fleeing from Apollo, was by her father transformed into a laurel; hence Apollo's partiality for the laurel wreath.

672. *Julep.*] A syrup or other vehicle in which medicine is administered.

673. *Flames and dances, &c.*] Sparkles and vibrates within the crystal glass. So in the *Samson Agon.* 543, 'Nor did the dancing ruby, sparkling, out-poured, &c., allure thee.'

675. *Nepenthes.*] This Greek word signifies *driving away care.* Homer in the Odyssey, iv. 219, tells us that Jove-born Helen cast a drug of this name into the wine which her husband, Menelaus, and others were drinking; and that drugs of such virtue had been given her by Polydamna, the wife of Thone, an Egyptian. Helena was the daughter of Jupiter and Leda, and was renowned for her beauty. *See* Spenser's description of Nepenthe in the *Faerie Queene,* IV. iii. 43. Thomson in his *Castle of Indolence* (i. 27) has 'a fountain of Nepenthe.'

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In Egypt gave to Jove-born Helena,
Is of such power to stir up joy as this,
To life so friendly, or so cool to thirst.
Why should you be so cruel to yourself,
And to those dainty limbs, which nature lent
For gentle usage and soft delicacy?
But you invert the covenants of her trust,
And harshly deal, like an ill-borrower,
With that which you received on other terms;
Scorning the unexempt condition
By which all mortal frailty must subsist,—
Refreshment after toil, ease after pain,—
That have been tired all day without repast,
And timely rest have wanted; but, fair virgin,
This will restore all soon.
Lady. 'Twill not, false traitor!
'Twill not restore the truth and honesty
That thou hast banished from thy tongue with lies.
Was this the cottage and the safe abode
Thou told'st me of? What grim aspects are these,
These ugly-headed monsters? Mercy guard me!
Hence with thy brewed enchantments, foul deceiver!
Hast thou betrayed my credulous innocence
With visored falsehood and base forgery?
And wouldst thou seek again to trap me here
With lickerish baits, fit to ensnare a brute?
Were it a draught for Juno when she banquets,
I would not taste thy treasonous offer; none

683. *Harshly deal.*] Namely, by refusing the means of restoration when faint with fatigue and fasting.

688. *That.*] The antecedent of this relative is *you* in *l.* 682.

698. *Base forgery.*] This refers to Comus having counterfeited the appearance of 'a harmless villager.'

700. *Lickerish.*] Tempting the appetite. From the Fr. *lecher*, to lick.

702. *None but such, &c.*] This thought Milton seems to have taken from his favourite poet, Euripides, who, in the *Medea*, 618, says, 'the gifts of a bad man have no goodness.'

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But such as are good men can give good things;
And that which is not good, is not delicious
To a well-governed and wise appetite.
Comus. O foolishness of men! that lend their ears
To those budge doctors of the Stoic fur,
And fetch their precepts from the Cynic tub,
Praising the lean and sallow abstinence!
Wherefore did nature pour her bounties forth
With such a full and unwithdrawing hand,
Covering the earth with odours, fruits, and flocks,
Thronging the seas with spawn innumerable,
But all to please and sate the curious taste?
And set to work millions of spinning worms,
That in their green shops weave the smooth-haired silk,
To deck her sons; and, that no corner might
Be vacant of her plenty, in her own loins
She hutcht the all-worshipped ore and precious gems,
To store her children with. If all the world
Should in a pet of temperance feed on pulse,
Drink the clear stream, and nothing wear but frieze,
The All-giver would be unthanked, would be unpraised,
Not half his riches known, and yet despised;
And we should serve him as a grudging master,
As a penurious niggard of his wealth,
And live like nature's bastards, not her sons,

---

707. *Budge.*] Austere, surly. There is, however, an equivocal reference to another meaning of *budge*, viz., lamb's fur. 'The Stoic fur' means the gown worn by professors of the Stoic philosophy.

708. *From the Cynic tub.*] That is, from Diogenes the Stoic, who is said to have lived in a tub. The Stoics were called Cynics from their snarling disposition; κυνικος signifying *canine*.

714. *All to please.*] *All* is adverbial to the verb following, and signifies entirely or purely. The infinitives 'to please and sate' are adverbial to *pour*.

715. *And set.*] And she set. Milton sometimes omits the pronominal subject of a verb, through imitation of Latin and Greek.

719. *Hutcht.*] Laid up as in a hutch or chest.

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Who would be quite surcharged with her own weight,
And strangled with her waste fertility;
The earth cumbered, and the winged air darked with plumes,
The herds would over multitude their lords,
The sea o'erfraught would swell, and the unsought diamonds
Would so imblaze the forehead of the deep,
And so bestud with stars, that they below
Would grow inured to light, and come at last
To gaze upon the sun with shameless brows.
List, lady, be not coy, and be not cozened
With that same vaunted name, virginity.
Beauty is nature's coin, must not be hoarded,
But must be current; and the good thereof
Consists in mutual and partaken bliss,
Unsavoury in the enjoyment of itself;
If you let slip time, like a neglected rose
It withers on the stalk with languished head.
Beauty is nature's brag, and must be shewn
In courts, at feasts, and high solemnities,
Where most may wonder at the workmanship;
It is for homely features to keep home,—
They had their name thence; coarse complexions
And cheeks of sorry grain will serve to ply
The sampler, and to tease the housewife's wool.
What need a vermeil-tinctured lip for that,
Love-darting eyes, or tresses like the morn?
There was another meaning in these gifts;
Think what, and be advised: you are but young yet.
Lady. I had not thought to have unlocked my lips
In this unhallowed air, but that this juggler

748. *Homely features.*] So in Shakspeare's *Two Gent. of Verona*, i. 1.

Home-keeping youth have ever homely wits.

755. *You are but young yet.*] That is, be advised since you are not old enough to judge for yourself.

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Would think to charm my judgment, as mine eyes,
Obtruding false rules prankt in reason's garb.
I hate when vice can bolt her arguments,
And virtue has no tongue to check her pride.
Impostor! do not charge most innocent nature
As if she would her children should be riotous
With her abundance; she, good cateress,
Means her provision only to the good,
That live according to her sober laws,
And holy dictate of spare temperance:
If every just man that now pines with want
Had but a moderate and beseeming share
Of that which lewdly-pampered luxury
Now heaps upon some few with vast excess,
Nature's full blessings would be well dispensed,
In unsuperfluous even proportion,
And she no whit encumbered with her store:
And then the Giver would be better thanked,
His praise due paid: for swinish gluttony
Ne'er looks to Heaven amidst his gorgeous feast,

---

759. *Prankt.*] Decked in a showy manner. The word occurs with this meaning several times in Shakspeare. Spenser uses it to denote *trimmed.*

> Some prankt their ruffs, and others trimly dight
> Their gay attire. *F. Q.* I. iii. 14.

Thomson, in his *Castle of Indolence*, i. 3, says of the wizard's dale: -

> And there a season atween June and May;
> Half-prankt with Spring, with Summer half-embrowned,
> A listless climate made.

Milton had become *a modern poet* when he wrote 'Thus Belial, with words *clothed* in reason's garb.' *Par. Lost*, ii. 226.

760. *Bolt.*] Choose out. To *bolt* or *boult* is to sift, separate, single out, as the boulting-mill separates flour from bran.

> [He] is ill schooled
> In boulted language; meal and bran together
> He throws without distinction.
> Shakesp. *Coriolanus*, iii. 1.
> Sure he's gone home; I've beaten all the purlieus,
> But cannot bolt him.
> Fletcher, *The Chances*, i. 6.
> I do not doubt yet
> To bolt you out; for I know certainly
> You are about the town still.
> *Do.* iii. 4.

In Shirley's *Humorous Courtier*, V., there is a play on the word *bolt*, as meaning also an arrow:— the Duchess says 'We'll *sift* the treason,' on which Depazzi says, 'And let the traitors be *bolted.*'

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But, with besotted base ingratitude,
Crams, and blasphemes his Feeder. Shall I go on?
Or have I said enough? To him that dares
Arm his profane tongue with contemptuous words
Against the sun-clad power of chastity,
Fain would I something say;—yet to what end?
Thou hast nor ear nor soul to apprehend
The sublime notion and high mystery
That must be uttered, to unfold the sage
And serious doctrine of virginity;
And thou art worthy that thou shouldst not know
More happiness than this thy present lot.
Enjoy your dear wit, and gay rhetoric,
That hath so well been taught her dazzling fence;
Thou art not fit to hear thyself convinced:
Yet, should I try, the uncontrolled worth
Of this pure cause would kindle my rapt spirits
To such a flame of sacred vehemence,
That dumb things would be moved to sympathise,

782. *Sun-clad.*] As the Moon, the emblem of chastity (*see l.* 441), is clothed with light by Phœbus, so Spenser, in his *Faerie Queene*, III. vi., representing Chastity in the person of Belphœbe, says, 'And Phœbus with fair beams did her adorn.' But the epithet here may be intended to denote a brightness which overpowers those who presumptuously gaze upon it. Compare *l.* 425.

786. *The sage and serious doctrine.*] 'By studying the reveries of the Platonic writers,' says Warton, 'Milton contracted a theory concerning chastity and the purity of love, in the contemplation of which, like other visionaries, he indulged his imagination with ideal refinements, and with pleasing but unmeaning notions of excellence and perfection.'

Milton himself, in his *Apology for Smectymnuus*, tells us that in his younger days he learnt from 'lofty fables and romances' 'what a noble virtue chastity sure must be, to the defence of which so many worthies, by such a dear adventure of themselves, had sworn;' and that 'riper years, and the ceaseless round of study and reading,' led him to appreciate the 'abstracted sublimities' of Plato and Xenophon on this subject.

791. *Her dazzling fence.*] How to use, in defence of a bad cause, such weapons of sophistry as may dazzle or beguile the unwary.

'The best *fencer in wit's school* hath now and then an unhappy blow dealt him.' Fuller's *Holy War*, ii. 24.

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And the brute earth would lend her nerves, and shake,
Till all thy magic structures, reared so high,
Were shattered into heaps o'er thy false head.
Comus. She fables not; I feel that I do fear
Her words set off by some superior power;
And though not mortal, yet a cold shuddering dew
Dips me all o'er, as when the wrath of Jove
Speaks thunder and the chains of Erebus
To some of Saturn's crew. I must dissemble,
And try her yet more strongly.—Come, no more;
This is mere moral babbe, and direct
Against the canon-laws of our foundation;
I must not suffer this; yet 'tis but the lees
And settlings of a melancholy blood:
But this will cure all straight; one sip of this
Will bathe the drooping spirits in delight,
Beyond the bliss of dreams. Be wise, and taste.

THE BROTHERS *rush in with swords drawn, wrest his glass out of his hand, and break it against the ground: his rout make sign of resistance; but all are driven in.* THE ATTENDANT SPIRIT *comes in.*

Spirit. What, have you let the false enchanter 'scape?
O ye mistook, ye should have snatched his wand,
And bound him fast; without his rod reversed,

---

797. *The brute earth, &c.*] The senseless earth would lend the help of her nerves. Milton had here in mind the *bruta tellus* of Horace, *Od.* I. xxxiv. 11.

805. *Some of Saturn's crew.*] The Titans who warred against the gods, and whom Jupiter with his thunder drove down to Erebus, the gloomiest region of the infernal world. *Speaks* signifies *denounces.*

808. *Foundation.*] Establishment, institution.

810. *Melancholy blood.*] The human temperament was supposed to be formed by the varied intermixture of four humours in the body, viz., blood, phlegm, choler, and melancholy. The literal meaning of *melancholy* is *black bile*, and melancholy and hypochondria were supposed to proceed from a predominance of black bile. In the *Samson Agon.* 599, the poet speaks of suggestions proceeding from 'humours black that mingle with the fancy.'

816. *Rod reversed, &c.*] Ovid describes Circe as working a counter-charm by reversing her

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And backward mutters of dissevering power,
We cannot free the lady that sits here
In stony fetters fixed and motionless:
Yet stay, be not disturbed; now I bethink me,
Some other means I have which may be used,
Which once of Melibœus old I learnt,
The soothest shepherd that e'er piped on plains.
There is a gentle nymph not far from hence,
That with moist curb sways the smooth Severn stream,
Sabrina is her name, a virgin pure;
Whilom she was the daughter of Locrine,
That had the sceptre from his father Brute.
The guiltless damsel, flying the mad pursuit
Of her enraged stepdame Guendolen,
Commended her fair innocence to the flood
That staid her flight with his cross-flowing course.
The water-nymphs, that in the bottom played,
Held up their pearled wrists, and took her in,
Bearing her straight to aged Nereus' hall;
Who, piteous of her woes, reared her lank head,
And gave her to his daughters to imbathe
In nectared lavers, strewed with asphodel,
And through the porch and inlet of each sense
Dropt in ambrosial oils, till she revived,
And underwent a quick immortal change,

---

wand and the words she had formerly pronounced: —

Percutimurque caput *conversæ* verbere *virgæ*,
Verbaque dicuntur *dictis contraria verbis*.
Met. xiv. 300.

823. *Soothest.*] Truest, most truthful or faithful.

826. *Sabrina.*] This is the Latin name of the Severn, derived, as was supposed, from Sabrina, who was daughter of King Locrine and his paramour Estrildis, and was cast into this stream by his indignant queen Guendolen. *See* Spenser's *Faery Queen*, II. x. 19.

837. *His daughters.*] Nereus, an ancient god of the sea, was attended by a numerous band of daughters called the Nereids, the most noted of whom were Amphitrite and Thetis; the former of these became the wife of Neptune, and the latter the mother of Achilles.

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Made goddess of the river: still she retains
Her maiden gentleness, and oft at eve
Visits the herds along the twilight meadows,
Helping all urchin blasts, and ill-luck signs
That the shrewd meddling elf delights to make,
Which she with precious vialled liquors heals:
For which the shepherds at their festivals
Carol her goodness loud in rustic lays,
And throw sweet garland wreaths into her stream,
Of pansies, pinks, and gaudy daffodils.
And, as the old swain said, she can unlock
The clasping charm, and thaw the numming spell,
If she be right invoked in warbled song:
For maidenhood she loves, and will be swift
To aid a virgin, such as was herself,
In hard-besetting need; this will I try,
And add the power of some adjuring verse.

SONG.

Sabrina fair,
Listen where thou art sitting
Under the glassy, cool, translucent wave,
In twisted braids of lilies knitting
The loose train of thy amber-dropping hair;
Listen for dear honour's sake,
Goddess of the silver lake,
Listen and save!

---

845. *Helping all urchin blasts.*] Remedying all elf-blasts, all evil infection brought upon plants or animals by the spirits called urchins; whom Keightly, in his *Fairy Mythology*, conjectures to be the same as the Scandinavian *duerga* or dwarf spirits. The name *urchin*, as here used, has probably no reference to the hedge-hog, although that animal shared with toads, bats, &c., the odious repute of being sometimes a medium of sorcery with witches. In Lylie's *Maids' Metamorphosis* ii. the fairies sing, 'As we dance the dew doth fall, Trip it, little urchins all.' In Shakspeare's *Merry Wives*, iv. 4, Mrs. Page speaks of dressing children, 'like urchins, ouphes [*i. e.*, elves] and fairies.'

852. *The old swain.*] Meliboeus.

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Listen, and appear to us,
In name of great Oceanus;
By the earth-shaking Neptune's mace,
And Tethys' grave majestic pace;
By hoary Nereus' wrinkled look,
And the Carpathian wizard's hook;
By scaly Triton's winding shell,
And old sooth-saying Glaucus' spell;
By Leucothea's lovely hands,
And her son that rules the strands;
By Thetis' tinsel-slippered feet,
And the songs of Sirens sweet;
By dead Parthenope's dear tomb,
And fair Ligea's golden comb,

869. *Mace.*] Trident. *Earth-shaking* is an Homeric epithet of Neptune, who was the supposed author of earthquakes.

870. *Tethys.*] A very ancient divinity, whom Ovid calls the hoary Tethys, and represents as being, along with her husband, the aged Oceanus, held in great veneration by other deities. *See Met.* ii. 509.

872. *Wizard.*] Prophet. This was Proteus, who usually resided in the Carpathian Sea, a part of the Mediterranean near Crete, and had the care of Neptune's phocæ or sea-calves, an employment to which Milton refers by the pastoral hook. *See* Virgil's *Georg.* iv. 387.

873. *Winding shell.*] Trumpet. Triton was the trumpeter of Neptune.

875. *Leucothĕa.*] Ino threw herself into the sea with her son Melicerta, when madly pursued by her husband Athamas. Neptune having then changed Ino and her son into sea deities, the latter was supposed to have received special power to save shipwrecked mariners, and their names were changed to Leucothĕa and Portumnus or Palæmon. *See* Ovid's *Fasti*, vi. 545, and *Met.* iv. 538.

877. *Thetis.*] One of the Nereids whom Milton calls tinsel-slippered, as Homer calls her silver-footed. And here, it should be observed that *tinsel*, from the French *etincelle*, was employed by Milton to denote sparkling or glistening, without reference to what is now the chief import of the word. *See* Trench's *English Past and Present*, p. 130. Parthenope and Ligea, afterwards mentioned, were two of the Sirens —the tomb of the former was at Naples, the latter is represented by Milton in the usual attitude of a mermaid.

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Wherewith she sits on diamond rocks,
Sleeking her soft alluring locks;
By all the nymphs that nightly dance
Upon thy streams with wily glance;
Rise, rise, and heave thy rosy head,
From thy coral-paven bed,
And bridle in thy headlong wave,
Till thou our summons answered have.
Listen and save!

SABRINA *rises, attended by Water-Nymphs, and sings.*

By the rushy-fringed bank,
Where grow the willow and the osier dank,
My sliding chariot stays,
Thick set with agate, and the azure sheen
Of turkois blue, and emerald green,
That in the channel strays;
Whilst from off the waters fleet
Thus I set my printless feet
O'er the cowslip's velvet head,
That bends not as I tread;
Gentle swain, at thy request,
I am here.
Spir. Goddess dear,
We implore thy powerful hand
To undo the charmed band

---

894. *Turkis.*] The turkois, or turquoise, is a Persian gem of a bluish-green colour.

899. *That bends not, &c.*] Prospero, in Shakspeare's Tempest, v. 1, speaks of the 'printless foot' of elves sporting on the sand. But the notion of the unbending cowslip was probably derived from Virgil's description of the Volscian Queen Camilla, who in swiftness outstripped the wind, and who could skim over the standing corn without depressing the stalks, and over the surface of the sea with undipping foot. In allusion to the passage in Virgil, Pope both commends and imitates the rapidity of the poet's language.

> When swift Camilla scours the plain
> Flies o'er the unbending corn and skims along the main.
> *Essay on Criticism*, 372.

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Of true virgin here distressed,
Through the force and through the wile
Of unblessed enchanter vile.
Sabr. Shepherd, 'tis my office best
To help ensnared chastity:
Brightest lady, look on me;
Thus I sprinkle on thy breast
Drops, that from my fountain pure
I have kept, of precious cure;
Thrice upon thy finger's tip,
Thrice upon thy rubied lip:
Next this marble venomed seat,
Smeared with gums of glutinous heat,
I touch with chaste palms moist and cold:
Now the spell hath lost his hold;
And I must haste, ere morning hour,
To wait in Amphitrite's bower.

SABRINA *descends, and* THE LADY *rises out of her seat.*

Spir. Virgin, daughter of Locrine,
Sprung of old Anchises' line,
May thy brimmed waves, for this,
Their full tribute never miss
From a thousand petty rills
That tumble down the snowy hills:
Summer drought, or singed air,
Never scorch thy tresses fair,
Nor wet October's torrent flood
Thy molten crystal fill with mud;

913. *Of precious cure.*] Here *cure* denotes curative efficacy. The literal construction is—Drops of precious cure, from my pure fountain, that I have kept.

923. *Of old Anchises' line.*] Because Æneas, son of Anchises, was father of Ascanius, and Sylvius, son of Ascanius, was father of the Trojan Brutus, and Brutus was father of Locrine.

924. *Brimmed.*] Enclosed within banks.

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May thy billows roll ashore
The beryl and the golden ore;
May thy lofty head be crowned
With many a tower and terrace round,
And here and there thy banks upon
With groves of myrrh and cinnamon.
Come, lady, while Heaven lends us grace
Let us fly this cursed place,
Lest the sorcerer us entice
With some other new device.
Not a waste or needless sound,
Till we come to holier ground;
I shall be your faithful guide
Through this gloomy covert wide;
And not many furlongs thence
Is your father's residence,
Where this night are met in state
Many a friend to gratulate
His wished presence; and, beside,
All the swains that near abide
With jigs and rural dance resort;
We shall catch them at their sport,
And our sudden coming there
Will double all their mirth and cheer:

---

937. *With groves.*] That is, and may thy lofty head be crowned with groves of myrrh and cinnamon here and there [growing] upon thy banks. The groves that crown the banks are supposed to transfer honour to Sabrina, and to contribute to the dignity of her crown; but they may also be understood as more literally crowning the stream by overshadowing it. So Spenser in the *Faerie Queene*:

> But nymphs and fairies by the banks did sit
> In the wood's shade which did the waters crown. VI. x. 7.
>
> Through many woods and shady coverts flown,
> That on each side her silver channel crown. VI. vi. 41.

942. *Not a waste, &c.*] Let us not have any needless or useless talk.

948. *Are met.*] This should be *is met*, to agree with the subject *many a friend*.

950. *And beside.*] And around, or close to, his residence.

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Come, let us haste, the stars grow high,
But night sits monarch yet in the mid sky.

The Scene changes, presenting Ludlow town and the President's Castle; then come in Country Dancers; after them THE ATTENDANT SPIRIT, *with the* TWO BROTHERS *and* THE LADY.

SONG.

Spir. Back, shepherds, back; enough your play,
Till next sun-shine holiday:
Here be, without duck or nod,
Other trippings to be trod
Of lighter toes, and such court guise
As Mercury did first devise,
With the mincing Dryades,
On the lawns, and on the leas.

---

956. *The stars grow high.*] The stars appear to be higher or more distant at the approach of morning.

957. *Night sits, &c.*] That is, it is not yet past the time of midnight.

958. *Enough your play.*] There has been enough of your dancing, &c., which must now give place to another kind of dancing.

959. *Sun-shine holiday.*] The same expression occurs in *L'Allegro*, 98.

960. *Without duck or nod.*] Without such forms of obeisance as those of shepherds and servants; for now were the young lady and her brothers come 'to triumph in victorious dance.'

960. *Of such court guise.*] Of such court fashion, or refined style. Spenser has 'courtly guise.' —*F. Q.* I. iv. 14.

963. *Mercury did first devise.*] Mercury, among the heathen deities, was the representative of agility and swiftness; and he was the first civiliser of human manners. *See* Horace, *Od.* I. x. 1–4; and compare Horace's *decoræ palæstræ* with Virgil's *agresti palæstra*, in the *Georg.* ii. 531.

964. *The Mincing Dryades.*] The Dryades were wood-nymphs, so called from the Greek word for an oak. Ovid, *Met.* viii. 746, represents them as often dancing under an aged oak:

Sæpe sub hâc Dryades festas duxere choreas.

The word *mincing* denotes tripping lightly and delicately, with short steps. Hence in Shakspeare, *Merch. Ven.* iii. 4:

Turn two mincing steps into a manly stride.

See Isaiah, iii. 16.

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This second Song presents them to their Father and Mother.

Noble lord, and lady bright,
I have brought ye new delight;
Here behold so goodly grown
Three fair branches of your own;
Heaven hath timely tried their youth,
Their faith, their patience, and their truth;
And sent them here, through hard assays,
With a crown of deathless praise,
To triumph in victorious dance
O'er sensual folly and intemperance.

The Dances being ended, THE SPIRIT *epiloguizes.*

Spir. To the ocean now I fly,
And those happy climes that lie
Where day never shuts his eye,
Up in the broad fields of the sky;
There I suck the liquid air
All amidst the gardens fair
Of Hesperus, and his daughters three
That sing about the golden tree:
Along the crisped shades and bowers
Revels the spruce and jocund Spring;
The Graces and the rosy-bosomed Hours
Thither all their bounties bring;
There eternal Summer dwells,
And west-winds, with musky wing,
About the cedarn alleys fling

979. *Broad fields, &c.*] Compare *l.* 4. Virgil has 'Aëris in campis latis.' *Æn.* vi. 888.

981. *All.*] Adverbial to the preposition phrase following.

984. *Crisped.*] With curled leaves.

990. *Cedarn alleys.*] So in Fuller's *Holy and Profane State*, i. 5: 'Sallats are made of *eldern* buds.' The final *n* or *en*, in such words as *oaken*, *golden*, *leathern*, is probably the old genitive suffix, denoting *of*.

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Nard and cassia's balmy smells.
Iris there with humid bow
Waters the odorous banks, that blow
Flowers of more mingled hue
Than her purfled scarf can shew;
And drenches with Elysian dew
(List, mortals, if your ears be true,)
Beds of hyacinth and roses,
Where young Adonis oft reposes,
Waxing well of his deep wound
In slumber soft, and on the ground
Sadly sits the Assyrian queen:
But, far above in spangled sheen,
Celestial Cupid, her famed son, advanced,
Holds his dear Psyche sweet entranced,
After her wandering labours long,
Till free consent the gods among
Make her his eternal bride,
And from her fair unspotted side

---

993. *Blow.*] Here employed causatively, like *descry* in *l.* 141.

995. *Purfled.*] Embroidered. From the Fr. *pourfiler*. So in Spenser's *F. Q.*

> A goodly lady, clothed in scarlet red,
> Purfled with gold and pearl of rich assay. I. ii. 13.

997. *If your ears be true.*] The spirit here proceeding to refer to the love of Venus and Adonis, wishes to be listened to with chaste ears.

1000. *Waxing well, &c.*] The beautiful youth Adonis, while hunting in Lebanon, was wounded to death by a boar, and was much lamented by the goddess Venus. He was supposed to be annually wounded, and again restored to life, and had therefore two commemoration days, one of lamentation followed by one of rejoicing. The 'gardens feigned of revived Adonis' (*Par. Lost*, ix. 439) were celebrated for their beauty and fruitfulness;

> Thy promises are like Adonis' gardens,
> That one day bloomed, and fruitful were the next.
> Shaksp. 1 *King Henry VI.* i. 6.

Milton calls Venus the Assyrian Queen, because she was first worshipped in Assyria.

1004. *Advanced.*] A participle: Cupid advanced far above, &c.

1005. *Psyche.*] The beautiful Psyche, after many severe trials imposed on her by Venus, who for a long time disapproved the attachment that had been formed between Cupid and Psyche, was at last received into favour by the

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Two blissful twins are to be born,
Youth and Joy: so Jove hath sworn.
But, now my task is smoothly done,
I can fly, or I can run,
Quickly to the green earth's end,
Where the bowed welkin slow doth bend;
And from thence can soar as soon
To the corners of the moon.
Mortals that would follow me,
Love virtue: she alone is free:
She can teach ye how to climb
Higher than the sphery chime;
Or if virtue feeble were,
Heaven itself would stoop to her.*

---

goddess, and, with Jove's sanction, made one of heaven's divinities. Her story was meant to represent the soul (which her name denotes) purified by earthly trials, and disciplined for the enjoyment of heaven.

1012. *Now my task, &c.*] Now that my task is ended by all things being smoothly settled.

1015. *Bowed welkin, &c.*] The arched sky is here supposed to be so nearly approached, that its bending is scarcely perceived.

1020. *The sphery chime.*] The starry choir; the sounding spheres.

* It should have been remarked under *l.* 58, that the name of this Masque is a Greek word, κωμος, signifying revelry, or the presiding genius of mirth; whence the comus song of the Greeks called Comœdia or Comedy.

Ben Jonson in one of his Masques introduces 'Comus the god of cheer'; and the same personification occurs in his *Forest*, 3. In Massinger's *City Madam*, iv. 2, Tradewell says, 'The god of pleasure, Master Luke, our Comus, enters.'

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L'ALLEGRO,

OR

THE MERRY MAN.

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L'ALLEGRO.

HENCE, loathed Melancholy,
Of Cerberus and blackest midnight born
In Stygian cave forlorn,
'Mongst horrid shapes, and shrieks, and sights unholy!
Find out some uncouth cell,
Where brooding Darkness spreads his jealous wings,
And the night-raven sings:
There under ebon shades, and low-browed rocks,
As ragged as thy locks,
In dark Cimmerian desert ever dwell.

Line 2. *Of Cerberus, &c.*] Melancholy might have been imagined the offspring of *Erebus*, the legitimate husband of Night; and Dr. Newton conjectured that Milton chose *Cerberus* in order to imply something cynical, as well as monstrous and unnatural, in the disposition of Melancholy. But we have no doubt that our poet's favourite Ovid suggested to him the *light-hating* Cerberus. The triple-headed monster, when dragged by Hercules from the Stygian realm up into the earth's atmosphere, strove to avert his eyes from the offensive radiance of day:

Restantem, contraque diem radiosque micantes
Obliquantem oculos, nexis adamante catenis,
Cerberon abstraxit. *Met.* vii. 411.

3. *In Stygian cave.*] That is, *born in* some dreary Stygian cave.

6. *His jealous wings.*] Darkness is very properly associated with jealousy or suspicion; but it is improper to suppose that there is here an allusion to the watchfulness of brooding fowl; the pronoun being masculine.

10. *Cimmerian desert.*] The adjective here has reference to the mythical Cimmerii of Homer, who were supposed to dwell on the western limits of the world, in a region of perpetual mist and darkness.

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But come, thou goddess fair and free,
In heaven yclept Euphrosyne,
And by men, heart-easing Mirth;
Whom lovely Venus, at a birth
With two sister Graces more,
To ivy-crowned Bacchus bore:
Or whether (as some sager sing)
The frolic wind that breathes the spring,
Zephyr with Aurora playing,
As he met her once a-Maying,
There on beds of violets blue,
And fresh-blown roses washed in dew,
Filled her with thee a daughter fair,
So buxom, blithe, and debonair.

---

12. *Euphrosyne.*] This Greek name signifies hilarity or mirth. It was not unusual for a divinity to have one name in heaven, and another among mortals. Euphrosyne was one of the three Graces, the others being Aglaia and Thalia.

Yclept, that is, clept, or called; the old English prefix *y* being a substitute for the Anglo-Saxon *ge*. In Milton we have perhaps only two instances of this form of the perfect participle, viz., that which occurs here, and the expression *ychained*, in his *Ode on the Nativity*, 155. In his *Epitaph on Shakspeare* the expression, 'a star-ypointing pyramid' is a license not well warranted, for the syllabic augment was scarcely ever prefixed to the present participle. Dr. Smith, in his edition of *Marsh's Lectures on the Eng. Lang.*, Note, p. 232, says: 'it is possible that Milton wrote *ypointed*, in which case the meaning would be *pointed*, or *surmounted with a star.*' We think that if *ypointed* is the true reading, the meaning may still be *having its point directed to the stars.*

17. *As some sager sing.*] As some more wisely celebrate thee. Milton is not here quoting from classical mythology, but expressing in mythological manner the opinion that mirth, instead of being produced by Bacchus and Venus, that is, by wine and love, is more wisely regarded as originating in such pleasure as that of the May morning, when the young go forth to welcome the return of spring, and to make preparation for the May-day pastimes. The Graces were usually reputed the daughters of Jupiter and Eurynome; but it suited Milton's subject to make Euphrosyne the offspring either of Bacchus and Venus, or of Zephyrus and Aurora.

24. *Buxom, blithe, &c.*]—The word *buxom*, from the German

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Haste thee, nymph, and bring with thee
Jest and youthful Jollity;
Quips, and cranks, and wanton wiles;
Nods, and becks, and wreathed smiles,
Such as hang on Hebe's cheek,
And love to live in dimple sleek;
Sport that wrinkled Care derides,
And Laughter holding both his sides.
Come, and trip it, as you go,
On the light fantastic toe;
And in thy right hand lead with thee
The mountain nymph, sweet Liberty;
And, if I give thee honour due,
Mirth, admit me of thy crew,

---

beugsam, originally signified *pliable, yielding, compliant*; and such perhaps may be its signification here, although Trench (*Select Glossary*) thinks Milton's joining of *buxom* with *blithe and debonair* an evidence that the meaning common in earlier writers had passed away. *Debonair* means *gentle;* and *buxom and blithe* are associated epithets in Shakspeare's *Pericles*, i. 1, where Gower says:

> Who died, and left a female heir
> So buxom, blithe, and full of face.

'The buxom air,' that is, the yielding air, occurs oftener than once in Spenser, and Milton twice uses that phrase in his *Par. Lost.*

27. *Quips and cranks.*] A *quip* is a satirical joke; *cranks*, literally, crooks or windings, here means merry quibbles.

'The pretty quips and girds they gave to others were of no less force than the sharpest words and admonitions.'—North's Plutarch, *Lycurgus.*

'How liked you my quip to Hedon about the garter? was't not witty?'— Ben Jonson's *Cynthia's Revels*, ii. 4.

'[Men] able to show us the ways of the Lord straight and faithful as they are, not full of cranks and contradictions.'—Milton's Address to Parliament on the *Doctrine, &c. of Divorce.*

28. *Wreathed.*] Curled; forming wreaths on the face.

30. *In dimple sleek.*] So, in Fletcher's *Faithful Shepherdess*, i. 1: 'Not the smile lies watching in those dimples, to beguile the easy soul.'

31. *That wrinkled care derides.*] That derides or sets at nought wrinkled Care. So in Phineas Fletcher's *Purple Island*, iv.:

> Here sportful Laughter dwells, here ever sitting
> Defies all lumpish Griefs and wrinkled Care.

37. *If I give thee, &c.*] If the pleasures I have to propose are patronised by thee.

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To live with her, and live with thee,
In unreproved pleasures free:
To hear the lark begin his flight,
And singing startle the dull night,
From his watch-tower in the skies,
Till the dappled dawn doth rise;
Then to come, in spite of sorrow,
And at my window bid good-morrow
Through the sweet-briar, or the vine,
Or the twisted eglantine:
While the cock, with lively din,
Scatters the rear of darkness thin,
And to the stack, or the barn-door,
Stoutly struts his dames before:
Oft listening how the hounds and horn
Cheerly rouse the slumbering morn,
From the side of some hoar hill
Through the high wood echoing shrill;
Some time walking, not unseen,
By hedge-row elms on hillocks green,
Right against the eastern gate
Where the great sun begins his state,
Robed in flames and amber light,
The clouds in thousand liveries dight;

41. *To hear the lark, &c.*] The poet here begins to propose to Mirth such *unreproved*, that is, innocent, pleasures as he would like to enjoy. The lark soaring to Heaven's gate to salute the approaching morn, is a favourite thought with the poets. Compare *Paradise Regained*, ii. 289.

45. *Then to come, &c.*] That is, the lark, when dawn arises, being then to come, deriding, or defying, sorrow.

48. *Eglantine.*] This is properly the sweet-brier; Milton meant the honey-suckle.

50. *Scatters the rear, &c.*] Dispels the lingering dimness.

57. *Some time walking, &c.*] Sometimes walking, not in gloomy solitude, but, as the poem presently tells us, in open sunshine, and where the ploughman, the milkmaid, &c., are about.

61. *Amber light.*] Amber coloured light.

62. *Dight.*] Dressed. The clouds are said to be dressed in

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While the ploughman near at hand
Whistles o'er the furrowed land,
And the milkmaid singeth blithe,
And the mower whets his scythe,
And every shepherd tells his tale
Under the hawthorn in the dale.
  Straight mine eye hath caught new pleasures,
While the landscape round it measures:
Russet lawns and fallows gray,
Where the nibbling flocks do stray;
Mountains, on whose barren breast
The labouring clouds do often rest;
Meadows trim with daisies pied,
Shallow brooks and rivers wide;
Towers and battlements it sees
Bosomed high in tufted trees,
Where perhaps some beauty lies,
The Cynosure of neighbouring eyes.
  Hard by, a cottage chimney smokes
From betwixt two aged oaks,
Where Corydon and Thyrsis met
Are at their savoury dinner set,
Of herbs and other country messes,
Which the neat-handed Phyllis dresses;
And then in haste her bower she leaves,
With Thestylis to bind the sheaves,

---

liveries, as if attending the king of day at his coming forth in state procession from the eastern gate.

67. *Tells his tale.*] This has been supposed to mean *tells the number of his flock*, counts his sheep; which seems an explanation much more appropriate to the occasion than *tells his story*.

80. *The Cynosure.*] The lode-star or pole-star. *See* Note on *l.* 341, of the *Comus*.

83. *Corydon and Thyrsis.*] These are names of rustic swains; and Phyllis and Thestylis afterwards occurring, names of rustic maids; all borrowed from Virgil's 2nd and 7th Eclogues.

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Or if the earlier season lead
To the tanned haycock in the mead.
  Sometimes with secure delight
The upland hamlets will invite,
When the merry bells ring round,
And the jocund rebecks sound
To many a youth and many a maid
Dancing in the checkered shade;
And young and old come forth to play
On a sunshine holyday,
Till the live-long daylight fail.
Then to the spicy nut-brown ale,
With stories told of many a feat,
How fairy Mab the junkets eat;

---

89. *Or if the earlier season, &c.*] Here is an example of the perplexed syntax too frequent in Milton. The conjunction *or* connects the verb *leaves* with two dissimilar adverbial clauses, one of purpose, another of concession. Phyllis leaves her bower in order to bind the harvest sheaves, or she leaves it if the earlier season lead to the hay-stack in the meadow.

91. *Secure delight.*] The word *secure* here means *setting care aside;* the poet being about to describe the festivities of 'a sunshine holiday,' probably those of the harvest-home.

94. *Rebecks.*] The rebeck was a sort of fiddle with three strings, played on with a bow, and adapted chiefly for jocund or merry music; hence Drayton, *Eclog.*

He turned his rebeck to a mournful note.

96. *Chequered shade.*] Shakspeare in *Titus Andronicus*, ii. 4, says:

The green leaves quiver with the cooling wind,
And make a chequered shadow on the ground.

Cowper, in *The Task, Bk. I.*, has the following lively description:

The chequered earth seems restless as a flood
Brushed by the wind. So sportive is the light
Shot through the boughs, it dances as they dance,
Shadow and sunshine intermingling quick,
And darkening and enlightening, as the leaves
Play wanton, every moment, every spot.

98. *A sunshine holiday.*] See *Comus, l.* 959.

99. *Live-long.*] Long lasting.

100. *Then to.*] Then we come to.

102. *How fairy Mab, &c.*] Called by Shakspeare 'Queen Mab' (*Rom. & Jul.* i. 4), and in Ben Jonson's *Satyr*, 'the mistress-faery.'

Junkets, or *juncates*, denoted cream-cheese and other delicacies that were wrapped in coverings made of *rushes* when sent to market. The Italian word *giun-*

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She was pinched and pulled, she said;
And he, by friar's lantern led,
Tells how the drudging goblin sweat
To earn his cream-bowl duly set,

---

cata, literally meaning *covered with rushes*, also signifies *cream-cheese*. (Lat. *juncus*, Ital. *giunco*, a rush.)

> And bear with you both wine and junc-
> cates fit.
> And bid him eat.
> Spenser's *F. Q.* V. iv. 49.

103. *She was pinched, &c.*] One of the wenches told how she was pinched by the fairies; and then one of the swains, having told how he had been drawn out of his way by Friar Rush's lantern, goes on to tell, &c.

Keightley, in his *Fairy Mythology*, p. 347, says of the phrase 'friar's lantern,' 'This is a palpable mistake of the poet's. The Friar is the celebrated Friar Rush, who haunted houses, not fields, and was never the same with Jack-o'-the-Lanthorn. It was probably the name Rush, which suggested *rushlight*, that caused Milton's error.' Keightley refers to a similar error in Sir Walter Scott's *Marmion*. *See*, in the next Note, a quotation from Harsenet, with which Keightley compares this part of *L'Allegro*.

Many of the old poets refer to the circumstance of fairies pinching sluttish maids.

105. *The drudging goblin.*] The word *goblin* is derived from *kobold*, the German name of a house-haunting spirit.

'The drudging goblin' here mentioned is Puck, or Robin Goodfellow. Shakspeare makes him clown or jester to Oberon the fairy-king, as being sometimes called *Lob* and *Lob-lie-by-the-fire*; the word *lob* signifying clown or fool. From *lob* is derived *lubber*, the epithet used by Milton in *l.* 110.

Burton, in his *Anatomy of Melancholy*, i. 2, speaking of fairies, says: 'A bigger kind there is of them, called with us Hobgoblins and Robin Goodfellows, that would, in those superstitious times, grind corn for a mess of milk, cut wood, or do any manner of drudgery work.'

Harsenet, in his *Declaration*, *ch.* 20, says: 'And if that the *bowl of curds and cream* were not *duly set out* for Robin Goodfellow, *the friar*, and Sisse the dairy-maid, why, then either the pottage was burned the next day in the pot, or the cheeses would not curdle, or the butter would not come, or the ale in the fat never would have good head.'

In Shakspeare's *Mids. Night's Dream*, ii. 1, a fairy says to Puck:

> Either I mistake your shape and making
> quite,
> Or else you are that shrewd and knavish
> sprite
> Called Robin Goodfellow. Are you not
> he
> That frights the maidens of the villagery,
> Skims milk, and sometimes labours in the
> quern,
> And bootless makes the breathless house-
> wife churn,
> And sometimes makes the drink to bear
> no barm,
> Misleads night wanderers, laughing at
> their harm?
> Those that Hobgoblin call you and sweet
> Puck,
> You do their work, and they shall have
> good luck.

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When in one night, ere glimpse of morn,
His shadowy flail hath threshed the corn,
That ten day-labourers could not end;
Then lies him down the lubber fiend,
And, stretched out all the chimney's length,
Basks at the fire his hairy strength;
And crop-full out of door he flings,
Ere the first cock his matin rings.
Thus done the tales, to bed they creep,
By whispering winds soon lulled asleep.
Towered cities please us then,
And the busy hum of men,
Where throngs of knights and barons bold,
In weeds of peace high triumphs hold,
With store of ladies, whose bright eyes
Rain influence, and judge the prize
Of wit or arms, while both contend
To win her grace whom all commend.
There let Hymen oft appear
In saffron robe with taper clear,

---

110. *The lubber-fiend.*] A lob or lubber is a heavy clownish fellow; but the Puck or Robin Goodfellow of the *Midsummer Night's Dream* is a small and nimble sprite, though a fairy calls him *lob of spirits*. As, however, the *jester* in the old drama was called the *clown*, Shakspeare may have meant by the word *lob* to refer to Puck as King Oberon's fool or jester: 'I jest to Oberon and make him smile,' says Puck to the fairy, *Act* ii. *sc.* 2.

In Beaumont and Fletcher's *Knight of the Burning Pestle*, iii. 1, there is mention of a drowsy giant, a witch's son 'that was called Lob-lie-by-the-fire;' and perhaps Milton may have confounded that lubber-fiend with Robin Goodfellow.

113. *And crop-full, &c.*] And having filled his crop, he rushes out before cock-crowing.

117. *Towered cities, &c.*] Then, or at other times, we would seek pleasure in cities.

122. *Judge the prize, &c.*] Award prizes to the best competitors in literary and martial skill.

126. *In saffron robe, &c.*] In B. Jonson's *Hymenæi, or Solemnities of Mask and Barriers at a Marriage*, we have Hymen de-

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And pomp, and feast, and revelry,
With mask and antique pageantry;
Such sights as youthful poets dream
On summer eves by haunted stream.
Then to the well-trod stage anon,
If Jonson's learned sock be on,
Or sweetest Shakespeare, Fancy's child,
Warble his native wood-notes wild.
And ever, against eating cares,
Lap me in soft Lydian airs
Married to immortal verse;
Such as the meeting soul may pierce,
In notes with many a winding bout
Of linked sweetness long drawn out;

---

scribed as entering 'in a saffron-coloured robe,' and bearing 'in his right hand a torch of pine-tree.' Milton here refers to such entertainments as are set forth in the *Hymenæi* of Jonson, and therefore calls them 'such sights as youthful poets dream,' &c.

132. *Jonson's learned sock.*] The comic actors in ancient times wore a kind of shoe called *the sock*, the tragic actors a kind of boot called *the buskin;* hence the sock and buskin are representative names for comedy and tragedy. Jonson, as a dramatist, was distinguished for learning. The superiority of natural genius in Shakspeare's comedy is referred to in lines 133–4; and in the *Epitaph on Shakspeare*, Milton says,

> To the shame of slow-endeavouring art,
> Thy easy numbers flow.

135. *Eating cares.*] What Horace, *Od.* I. xviii. 4, calls 'mordaces solicitudines.'

136. *Lap me, &c.*] When eating cares would assail me, lap or absorb my soul in soft Lydian airs. Of the three chief musical modes or measures among the ancients, the Dorian, Phrygian, and Lydian, the first was majestic, the second sprightly, the third amorous or tender.

137. *Married to immortal verse.*] This idea occurs in older poets. Our author, in his ode *At a solemn Music*, bids *Voice* and *Verse wed* their divine sounds.

138. *Such as the meeting soul, &c.*] Such as may penetrate the soul that encounters it, or is attracted by it.

139. *Bout.*] The Anglo-Saxon word *bought* is a fold, something *bowed* or bent. Spenser, in the *Faerie Queene*, I. i. 15, says of the monster Error,

> Her huge long tail her den all overspread
> Yet was in knots and many boughts upwound.

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With wanton heed and giddy cunning,
The melting voice through mazes running,
Untwisting all the chains that tie
The hidden soul of harmony;
That Orpheus' self may heave his head,
From golden slumber on a bed
Of heaped Elysian flowers, and hear
Such strains as would have won the ear
Of Pluto, to have quite set free
His half-regained Eurydice.
These delights if thou canst give,
Mirth, with thee I mean to live.

---

141. *Wanton heed, &c.*] The antithesis between the noun and adjective, in this phrase and the one following, is very expressive; the meaning is, that the voice, while it seems *wanton* and *giddy*, running as if at random, is all the while taking *heed* and exercising *cunning* (i. e. skill), proceeding with scientific accuracy and taste. The whole passage here respecting music is one of the finest in Milton's works.

144. *Soul of harmony.*] Milton seems here to imply some allusion to the doctrine of certain ancient philosophers, in particular Aristoxenus, who believed the soul to have some such relation to the body as the sound of a string to the string itself. Shakspeare (*Merch. of Venice*, v. 1), after speaking of the music of the spheres, says:

> Such harmony is in immortal souls;
> But whilst this muddy vesture of decay
> Doth grossly close it in, we cannot hear it.

Hooker, *Eccles. Polity*, v. 38, says of musical harmony: 'Such, notwithstanding, is the force thereof, and so pleasing effects it hath in that very part of man which is most divine, that some have been thereby induced to think that the soul itself, by nature, is or hath in it harmony.'

145. *That Orpheus self, &c.*] The conjunction *that* used, as here, for *so that*, is common in old writers. The story of Orpheus *half-regaining* his wife Eurydice from the infernal regions is well known.

149. *To have quite set free.*] To have granted the request of Orpheus *unconditionally*. The condition imposed on Orpheus was that he was not to look behind while his wife followed him out of the infernal regions; but on his way he forgot or failed to observe the condition, and his *half-regained Eurydice* vanished from his sight.

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IL PENSEROSO,

OR

THE THOUGHTFUL MAN.

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IL PENSEROSO.

HENCE, vain deluding Joys,
The brood of Folly without father bred!
How little you bested
Or fill the fixed mind with all your toys!
Dwell in some idle brain,
And fancies fond with gaudy shapes possess,
As thick and numberless
As the gay motes that people the sun-beams;
Or likest hovering dreams,
The fickle pensioners of Morpheus' train.
But hail, thou goddess sage and holy,
Hail, divinest Melancholy!
Whose saintly visage is too bright
To hit the sense of human sight,
And therefore to our weaker view
O'erlaid with black, staid Wisdom's hue;
Black, but such as in esteem
Prince Memnon's sister might beseem,

Line 2. *The brood of Folly, &c.*] The offspring of mere folly.

10. *Pensioners.*] Retinue, attendants.

14. *To hit the sense, &c.*] To be allowed to hit.

16. *O'erlaid.*] Shaded, darkened.

18. *Prince Memnon's sister.*] That is, might become a princess of Ethiopia. Probably no princess in particular is here alluded to, as Memnon was a general appellation borrowed by the Greeks from the Egyptian language, and was applied by them to various individuals. The noted fabulous king of Ethiopia, called Memnon, who was said to have assisted the Trojans, and to have been slain by Achilles, was the

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Or that starred Ethiop queen that strove
To set her beauty's praise above
The sea-nymphs, and their powers offended;
Yet thou art higher far descended;
Thee bright-hair'd Vesta, long of yore,
To solitary Saturn bore;
His daughter she; in Saturn's reign
Such mixture was not held a stain:
Oft in glimmering bowers and glades
He met her, and in secret shades
Of woody Ida's inmost grove,
Whilst yet there was no fear of Jove.

---

son of Tithonus and Aurora, and had no sister. The adjective Memnonius occurs in Latin poetry with the signification of *swarthy* or *eastern*. The famous Memnonium, or statue of Memnon, at Thebes in Upper Egypt, was said to emit harp-like sounds at the rising of Aurora, or when shone upon by the rays of the morning sun.

19. *Starred Ethiop queen.*] This was Cassiope or Cassiopea, the wife of Cepheus, king of Ethiopia, and the mother of Andromeda. The poet says she set her beauty's praise above the Nereids, and offended their powers, i. e. their *numina* or divinities. The story is, that Neptune, indignant with Cassiope for boasting herself to be fairer than the Nereids, laid waste the land of Cepheus with an inundation, and caused the fair Andromeda to be exposed to a sea-monster; and that the maid was rescued from this peril by Perseus. Cassiope, at her death, became a southern constellation; hence the poet calls her *starred*, that is, ranked among the stars.

23. *Long of yore.*] An expression equivalent to two adverbs; *long* being Milton's translation of the Latin *longé*, as in the phrase *longé anté*. He assigns the parentage of Melancholy to Vesta, as the goddess of purity and patroness of nuns, and Saturn, the father of that goddess, as the representative of the pensive, or what we call saturnine, spirit.

29. *Woody Ida.*] A mountain of Crete, where Jupiter was born and brought up. He afterwards made war upon his father; but Milton feigns Vesta, who was the eldest daughter of Saturn, to have been her father's favourite before Jove was born. Saturn devoured his male children as soon as they were born, because he feared they might rebel against him; but from this fate his wife Rhea managed to rescue Jupiter, Neptune, and Pluto.

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Come, pensive nun, devout and pure,
Sober, stedfast, and demure,
All in a robe of darkest grain
Flowing with majestic train,
And sable stole of cyprus lawn
Over thy decent shoulders drawn.
Come, but keep thy wonted state,
With even step and musing gait,
And looks commercing with the skies,
Thy rapt soul sitting in thine eyes:
There, held in holy passion still,
Forget thyself to marble, till,
With a sad, leaden, downward cast,
Thou fix them on the earth as fast;
And join with thee calm Peace and Quiet,
Spare Fast, that oft with gods doth diet,
And hears the Muses in a ring
Aye round about Jove's altar sing;
And add to these retired Leisure,
That in trim gardens takes his pleasure.

---

32. *Demure.*] Modest; *really* so, according to the old acceptation of the term *demure.*

33. *Sable stole, &c.*] A stole here means a hooded scarf. Cyprus was a thin transparent texture of a black colour; by *lawn*, Milton means *thin fabric.*

In Shakspeare's *Winter's Tale*, iv. 3, we have Autolycus singing of

Lawn as white as driven snow,
Cyprus black as e'er was crow.

B. Jonson, in his 73rd Epigram, speaks of a picture

One half drawn
In solemn cyprus, th'other cobweb lawn.

40. *Rapt.*] This word in the old writers signifies *carried away*, either in ecstasy or in a more literal sense.

41. *Held, &c.*] Held still or motionless in holy transport.

42. *Forget thyself to marble.*] Become as a statue through musing. In the *Epitaph on Shakspeare*, Milton says:

There thou our fancy of itself bereaving,
Dost make us marble by too much conceiving.

The phrase in *Il Penseroso* is imitated in Pope's *Eloïs. Abel. l.* 24:

I have not yet *forgot myself to stone.*

43. *As fast.*] As steadfastly. The sad downward cast of the eye is here designed to imply reflexion on the insufficiency of worldly, in contrast with spiritual, good.

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But first, and chiefest, with thee bring
Him that yon soars on golden wing,
Guiding the fiery-wheeled throne,
The cherub Contemplation;
And the mute Silence hist along,
'Less Philomel will deign a song
In her sweetest saddest plight,
Smoothing the rugged brow of Night,
While Cynthia checks her dragon yoke
Gently o'er the accustomed oak:
Sweet bird, that shun'st the noise of folly,
Most musical, most melancholy!
Thee, chantress, oft the woods among
I woo, to hear thy even-song;
And, missing thee, I walk unseen
On the dry smooth-shaven green,
To behold the wandering moon,
Riding near her highest noon,
Like one that had been led astray
Through the heaven's wide pathless way;
And oft, as if her head she bowed,
Stooping through a fleecy cloud.

---

52. *That yon soars.*] That soars yonder. This is an allusion to the vision described in Ezekiel, ch. x. *See* also *Par. Lost*, vi. 747.

55. *Hist along.*] Bid come with thee, by the signal she is wont to obey. *Hist* means *listen*, or *be quiet;* and Milton here very expressively uses a word which bids *sound* to be absent, as if it summoned *silence* to be present.

57. *Plight.*] Strain of interwoven sounds. *See* Note on *l.* 301 of the *Comus*.

58. *Smoothing the rugged brow, &c.*] Softening the stern aspect of night. Compare *Comus*, *l.* 251.

59. *While Cynthia, &c.*] While the Moon gently checks the dragons of Night's car over the oak where Philomel is wont to sing. *See* Note on *l.* 131 of the *Comus*.

62. *Most musical, &c.*] This is meant to intimate that the best music is associated with melancholy. Compare *l.* 57.

72. *Stooping, &c.*] Compare *Comus*, *l.* 333.

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Oft, on a plat of rising ground,
I hear the far-off curfew sound
Over some wide watered shore,
Swinging slow with sullen roar:
Or, if the air will not permit,
Some still removed place will fit,
Where glowing embers through the room
Teach light to counterfeit a gloom:
Far from all resort of mirth,
Save the cricket on the hearth,
Or the bellman's drowsy charm,
To bless the doors from nightly harm.
Or let my lamp, at midnight hour,
Be seen in some high lonely tower,
Where I may oft out-watch the Bear
With thrice great Hermes, or unsphere
The spirit of Plato, to unfold
What worlds, or what vast regions, hold

75. *Over, &c.*] That is, the sound swinging slow, &c., over some wide-watered shore.

77. *The air.*] The state of the atmosphere; the weather.

78. *Some still removed place.*] Some quiet retired place will be found suitable. So, in Shakspeare's *Hamlet*, iv. 4, the ghost beckons Hamlet 'to a more removed ground.'

80. *Teach light, &c.*] So Spenser has 'A little gloomy light much like a shade.' *F. Q.* I. i. 14.

83. *The bellman's drowsy charm.*] The drowsily uttered charm of the watchman. In old times, the night watchman, who called the hours, was often heard uttering charms, or night spells, to avert sundry perils of night from people's dwellings.

84. *Nightly.*] In the night; nocturnal. We now restrict this word to mean *night by night.*

87. *Out-watch the Bear.*] Have my lamp burning when the celestial lamp, called the Bear, has ceased to shine.

88. *With thrice-great Hermes.*] Studying the works of Hermes, the Egyptian, who was thrice-great, viz.: as a philosopher, a priest, and a king, and was therefore named Trismegistus or Termaximus.

Or unsphere, &c.] Holding communion with the mind of Plato, by reading his works, is here regarded as calling his spirit from its sphere to impart knowledge such as is contained in his *Phædo*, &c., respecting the regions of the blessed, &c.

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The immortal mind that hath forsook
Her mansion in this fleshy nook;
And of those demons that are found
In fire, air, flood, or under ground,
Whose power hath a true consent
With planet or with element.
Sometime let gorgeous Tragedy
In sceptred pall come sweeping by,
Presenting Thebes, or Pelops' line,
Or the tale of Troy divine;
Or what (though rare) of later age
Ennobled hath the buskined stage.
But O, sad Virgin, that thy power
Might raise Musæus from his bower!
Or bid the soul of Orpheus sing
Such notes as, warbled to the string,

---

93. *And of those demons, &c.*] That is, and to unfold of, or concerning, those demons, &c.—an awkward construction. The Platonists supposed there were demons in the elements of fire, air, earth, and water. Milton in the *Par. Reg.* ii. 122, makes Satan address the fallen angels as

> Demonian spirits now, from the element
> Each of his reign allotted, rightlier called
> Powers of fire, air, water, and earth beneath.

That is, Spirits more properly called Powers of fire, &c., each from the element of his allotted dominion.

95. *Whose power, &c.*] To whom is ascribed power of a kind that is really accordant with the nature of the planet or the element in which they reign.

98. *Sceptred pall.*] Royal robe. Milton conceived that regal woes were most suitable for tragedy.

99. *Presenting Thebes, &c.*] The Thebes here referred to is the capital of Bœotia; stories concerning which form subjects of the Greek drama. The woes of the descendants of Pelops, king of Phrygia, and the calamities of Troy, supplied also material for the ancient tragic muse. Troy is here called *divine* on account of the interest which the gods manifested concerning it during its memorable siege.

101. *Or what (though rare) &c.*] Or whatever subject of a later time has done honour to the tragic stage, though such representations have been rare. *See* Note on *l.* 132 of *L'Allegro.*

104. *Musæus.*] An ancient Greek poet, none of whose compositions are extant.

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Drew iron tears down Pluto's cheek,
And made Hell grant what love did seek:
Or call up him that left half-told
The story of Cambuscan bold,
Of Camball, and of Algarsife,
And who had Canace to wife
That owned the virtuous ring and glass;
And of the wondrous horse of brass
On which the Tartar king did ride:
And if aught else great bards beside
In sage and solemn tunes have sung,
Of turneys, and of trophies hung,
Of forests and enchantments drear,
Where more is meant than meets the ear.
Thus, Night, oft see me in thy pale career,
Till civil-suited morn appear,

---

108. *And made Hell grant, &c.*] An allusion to the story of Orpheus and Eurydice. *See L'Allegro, l.* 148.

109. *Him that left half-told, &c.*] Chaucer is meant; the half-told story being his *Squire's Tale*. The *Cambuscan* of Milton is in Chaucer *Cambinskan*, a king who dwelt 'at Sarray, in the land of Tartary,' and who had two sons, Algarsife and Camballo, and a daughter, Canace. The king of Araby and Ind sent, as presents, a horse of brass to the Tartar king, that would carry him speedily wherever he wished to go, and a gold ring and glass mirror to Canace; the virtue of the ring being that it made the wearer understand the language of birds and the properties of herbs, while the mirror enabled its possessor to divine secrets and foretell things future. According to Chaucer, *some knight* (called, through a mistake in the *Squire's Tale*, Camballo) was to win Canace by fighting with her two brothers. Spenser endeavoured to carry on the story in his *Faerie Queene*, Book IV., cantos ii. and iii., and made Canace become the wife of Triamond.

116. *And if aught else, &c.*] And whatever else, &c. (Lat. *siquid*). Such poets as Spenser, Tasso, and Ariosto, are here intended; they profess to give moral instruction under the veil of romantic fictions, on which account Milton says that in their poetry 'more is meant than meets the ear.'

121. *Thus, Night, &c.*] Thus let me be oft seen by thee, O Night, in thy pale course, till

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Not tricked and frounced as she was wont
With the Attic boy to hunt,
But kercheft in a comely cloud,
While rocking winds are piping loud,
Or ushered with a shower still,
When the gust hath blown his fill,
Ending on the rustling leaves
With minute drops from off the eaves.
And when the sun begins to fling
His flaring beams, me, goddess, bring
To arched walks of twilight groves,
And shadows brown, that Silvan loves,
Of pine or monumental oak,
Where the rude axe with heaved stroke
Was never heard the nymphs to daunt,
Or fright them from their hallowed haunt.
There, in close covert by some brook,
Where no profaner eye may look,

Aurora comes in civil, i.e. sober attire. So Fletcher, in *Rule a Wife, &c.*, iii. 4:

> But for one *civil gown* her lady gave her,
> She may go bare.
> One *civil suit* I have left too, and that 's all.

So also Shakspeare, in *Romeo and Juliet*, iii. 4:

> Come, civil night, thou sober-suited matron.

123. *Not tricked, &c.*] To *trick* is to array; to *frounce* is to frizzle the hair; Fr. *froncer*, to gather, to pucker.

124. *The Attic boy.*] Cephalus, the husband of Procris. When he was stag-hunting on Mount Hymettus, in Attica, Aurora, who was in love with him, carried him off, but could not prevail upon him to be unfaithful to Procris. *See* Ovid, *Met.* vii. 701.

125. *Kercheft.*] Having her head wrapped. Fr. *couvre chef.*

127. *A shower still.*] A quiet or gentle shower, when the wind has ceased, ending with drops falling at short intervals from off the eaves on the rustling leaves.

133. *Twilight groves.*] Groves in whose arched walks the light is as the morning twilight.

134. *Silvan.*] The rural deity Silvanus.

135. *Monumental.*] Hung with memorials. See what Ovid says, *Met.* viii., of the *memores tabellæ*, *l.* 744, and the *attonitæ Dryades*, *l.* 777.

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Hide me from day's garish eye,
While the bee with honeyed thigh,
That at her flowery work doth sing,
And the waters murmuring.
With such concert as they keep
Entice the dewy-feathered sleep;
And let some strange mysterious dream
Wave at his wings, in aery stream,
Of lively portraiture displayed,
Softly on my eyelids laid.
And as I wake, sweet music breathe
Above, about, or underneath,
Sent by some spirit to mortals good,
Or the unseen genius of the wood.
But let my due feet never fail
To walk the studious cloister's pale,
And love the high-embowed roof,

---

141. *Day's garish eye.*] The word *garish*, or *gairish*, signifies making a gaudy display; from the Saxon *gearwian*. Juliet, in Shakspeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, iii. 2, says:

> That all the world shall be in love with night,
> And pay no worship to the garish sun.

145. *Consort.*] Mingling of sounds. The bee and the waters with their mingling tones entice, &c. For *consort* in this sense we now use *concert*.

> Your music 's harsh, discharge it; I have provided
> A better consort.
> Massinger's *City Madam*, iv. 2.

148. *Wave at his wings, &c.*] The construction seems to be, 'Let some strange mysterious dream, of lively portraiture displayed, wave in aery stream at sleep's wings laid softly on my eyelids.'

155. *My due feet, &c.*] *Due* means when the stated hour of church service calls.

157. *And love, &c.*] Whether the construction be *let my due feet love*, or *let my due feet never fail to love*, the high embowed roof, we have a literal incongruity, which, however, does not disturb the poetic imagination. As Warton says of another passage in Milton: 'We must not here seek for precise meanings of parts, but acquiesce in a general idea resulting from the whole.' It may be observed that in after life the poetic spirit of Milton did not fail to love the things themselves which he here commends, although his puritan spirit made him adverse to them on account of circumstances with which they were connected.

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With antique pillars massy proof,
And storied windows, richly dight,
Casting a dim religious light:
There let the pealing organ blow
To the full voiced quire below,
In service high and anthems clear,
As may with sweetness, through mine ear,
Dissolve me into ecstasies,
And bring all heaven before mine eyes.
And may at last my weary age
Find out the peaceful hermitage,
The hairy gown and mossy cell;
Where I may sit and rightly spell
Of every star that heaven doth shew,
And every herb that sips the dew;
Till old experience do attain
To something like prophetic strain.
These pleasures, Melancholy, give,
And I with thee will choose to live.

---

158. *Massy proof.*] Of massy proof or strength.

159. *Storied windows, &c.*] Stained or painted windows representing incidents of sacred story, richly adorned.

170. *Spell.*] Learn the nature or influence.

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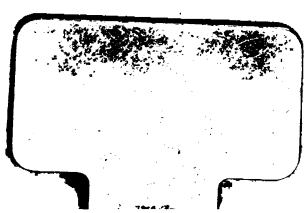
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